Mississippi Presbyterians and Race

Bending the Arc Toward Justice

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From Xlibris Publishers

What a remarkable document you've laid before us. I finished reading the first few sample chapters with a mixture of admiration, curiosity, and a keen sense of the work's potential to illuminate a critical slice of American religious history. What stands out most is a scholarly rigor paired with an insistence on documentary honesty. You enter Mississippi Presbyterian life not through abstraction but through concrete, verifiable detail—the galleries that segregated worship, the names and fates of ministers and congregations, the tangled economics of slavery woven into church funding. That bottom-up approach is a strength that invites readers to see how large national currents—slavery, abolition, frontier expansion, regional power—played out in the ordinary spaces where faith was practiced and money moved. It's a careful, careful excavation, and it matters.

Your narrative acquires momentum as it threads together arrival and settlement, mission work among Native Americans and enslaved Africans, and the evolving shape of slaveholding as a social and economic order. The throughline you've begun to trace—the church's internal debates, the pressures from economic incentives, and the way some arguments recast slavery as a providential public trust—offers a sober, morally rigorous framework for readers who come to understand how religious institutions can be both aspirational and compromised. I was struck by your willingness to acknowledge uncomfortable details—the gallery seating, the buying and selling that underwrites ecclesiastical life, ministers who defend a social order with Scripture in hand. This candor is not merely courageous; it's essential. It positions your work as a trustworthy source for readers who demand nuance and documentary integrity.

The human stories you anchor in your chapters—figures such as James Smylie, Benjamin Palmer, and Harrison Ellis—lend immediacy and texture to abstract debates. It's in their lived experiences that readers glimpse the moral calculus of the era: paternalistic care for souls amid an economy built on bondage, spiritual ambitions entwined with social complicity. You model a difficult honesty about how religious life can simultaneously aspire toward transcendence and participate in oppression. That tension is not just historically accurate; it is emotionally instructive for modern readers who seek to understand how institutions navigate faith, power, and profit.

From a market and readership perspective, your book speaks to timely and enduring interests. The intersection of religion and race in American history continues to captivate students, scholars, and informed lay readers alike. A Mississippi focus, seen through the lens of slavery, abolition, and the sectional reckonings that followed, resonates beyond regional boundaries because it crystallizes broader questions about how faith communities engage with systems of inequality. Your work has the potential to anchor course syllabi, to contribute robustly to public history conversations, and to enrich discussions about memory, accountability, and the shaping of regional identity in the national story. The project also aligns well with readers who value primary-source-driven narratives that remain accessible without sacrificing depth.

—Mary Flores, Senior Publishing Consultant

From Jack Elliott, Historical Archaeologist, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, retired

Milton Winter is the doyen of historians of Presbyterianism in Mississippi. Featured prominently in his work are a three-volume history of the denomination in the state and what I consider to be the most amazing history of any local church that I have ever encountered--in this case the Presbyterian Church in Marshall County, Mississippi.

In the work at hand, Winter again presents an overview of the panoply of Mississippi Presbyterianism but this time with an eye toward relations between the denomination on one hand and on the other, the native Indian inhabitants of the state and the black population that entered along with Euro-Americans. Throughout the narrative runs the tension between the competing roles of economic expediency and the ever-present, but often blurred, light of the Good. Well-balanced and tempered with compassion.

The heart of Paul's argument—and this is both new theologically and also basic to the Christian faith—is that diversity is God's idea. It is not an accident of geography or biology. It is not a nuisance to be overcome or a problem to be solved. Diversity is God's gift to the church. Diversity is part and parcel of God's good creation. It is rooted in the very character of God. And so to deny it, to treat people differently, to do violence to people, to oppress on the basis of their race, is not simply an affront; it is a denial of the reality of God. It is that basic. There is, in God's kingdom—and therefore there must be in God's church—a place for everybody.

—The Rev. John M. Buchanan

To the memory of William F. Winter,
progressive legislator, governor, Presbyterian elder,
and leader in the movement for racial reconciliation,
who encouraged me to write this book.

Foreword by Joseph Richard Hurt,

Professor of Constitutional Law and Law School Dean, Retired

I am pleased to pen these words to introduce this book by my lifelong friend and brother, Milton Winter! We have shared the journey of life since Kindergarten and enjoyed an enduring friendship since the 4th grade. That is when our teachers, the two Mrs. Smiths, brought two 9-year old boys, struggling to fit in, together. Milton introduced me to Presidential history (my lifelong passion), to coin collecting and to aquariums. As an only child, he became an additional brother in the Hurt household, where he was introduced sibling banter and the life of a minister (my father was a pastor). We survived the challenges of adolescence with each other's support, including peer taunting during our junior high years. When desegregation came, we stayed with the public schools, though many of our friends chose to finish high school at the local segregated academy.

Both of us were reared in the bosom of the Church—my father at Immanuel Baptist and Milton at First Presbyterian. His ministers were deeply influential, as was my father. He saw my father open the doors of our church to Black students from Delta State—and was present at our kitchen table discussions where we heard about church members left in protest. My father was not to be moved on this subject, and I think this shaped Milton's and my lives for years to come.

We went in different directions after high school graduation, but our friendship continued. I went to Mississippi College in Clinton and Milton to Delta State in Cleveland, Mississippi and Belhaven in Jackson. Milton was president of Westminster Fellowship, the Presbyterian campus organization, at both Delta State and Belhaven. After college, Milton was a groomsman in my wedding and delivered a eulogy at my Mother's funeral. I was a pallbearer at his Grandmother's and Father's funerals.

Milton was always an academic role model for me, without whom my career might have taken a different path. He comes from a distinguished family of educators: his Grandfather, Dr. William H. Zeigel (a Presbyterian elder of distinction) was the first Academic Dean at Delta State University, and his Mother, Aunt and Uncle were all college professors. His commitment to academic excellence inspired me to excel.

Milton became a minister in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., and earned theological degrees from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia and Princeton Theological Seminary, including the Ph.D., with a major in American history. His distinguished career has included eight years at the historic Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago; and Pastor for over 28 years of the First Presbyterian Church in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Additionally, Milton has become a recognized scholar of Mississippi Presbyterian history and Southern railroad history (his passion), publishing articles and books on both. Thank you, Milton, for you being my brother, my best friend, my spiritual inspiration, and my academic role model!

An Explanatory note: In this study, the word Black is capitalized in accordance with current scholarship, just as words denoting other racial and ethnic groups are capitalized: Scandinavian, Asian, Native American, Egyptian, and so forth. Black is becoming the preferred term over African American, for as author and historian Jemar Tisby has written, Black is inclusive of all people in the worldwide African diaspora, regardless of whether they reside in the United States or not. By contrast, I do not capitalize white, as the term refers to a generalized, non-specific grouping of those who do not consider themselves "persons of color." See Tisby's book, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Justice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021): 1.

A Word of Introduction...

The research leading to this book had its genesis in the first question I was asked in theological seminary. On my first day, within hours after arriving for study at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia the first professor I encountered turned out to be highly influential in my life. This was the late the Rev. Dr. James H. Smylie, Professor of American Church History and editor of *The Journal of Presbyterian History*. Omitting the usual southern pleasantries of introduction, he addressed me with a characteristic bluntness I would soon grow used to hearing: "Milton Winter, I understand you are from Mississippi. What can you tell me about my infamous ancestor there?"

I had no idea! But Dr. Smylie was persistent in urging me to secure answers. I would sit under Jim Smylie's teaching for the basic courses and finally he would guide me in writing a dissertation for a Ph.D.

Dr. Smylie's ancestor was the eponymous James Smylie, a pioneer Presbyterian missionary, preacher, and farmer, prominent in these pages. Smylie owned slaves and worked the bondsmen on his plantation, Myrtle Heath. In the process he gained wealth. Smylie became nationally famous by publishing in 1836 an impassioned defense of slavery that, among other things, pointed out that in the King James Version of the Bible, where the Apostle Paul refers to "servants" (Ephesians 6:5, etc.), the Greek word *douloi* should be translated "slaves" (and so indeed it has been by scholars and most Bible versions since that time).

Through the years I wrote books and articles on aspects of Presbyterian history, finally realizing that I had gathered enough material for a book about the Mississippi Church and Race, beginning with slavery. So, in a way, the question has come full circle. I owe the call to this research to my learned professor, James H. Smylie. May his advocacy for peace and racial justice continue as a legacy.

Some may ask, "Why another study on slavery, segregation, and civil rights?" There have been many. Some may say, "The past is over and done; let it lie. It is time to move on." But there is evidence that the topic is ripe once more.

Historians have talked about these matters as larger issues in which the church was involved; I wish to examine the struggles, as it were, from the inside, to let those church people, "testify."

When there has been division of opinion, as in debating slavery or segregation, I have tried to represent each viewpoint as fully as possible; to let everyone have their say. That is only fair; let the reader decide!

It is said, that when being introduced, a Northerner will say, "What is your work?" whereas the Southerner will ask "Who are your people?" This is good instinct, for people are crucial to the writing of history. And this is especially true in the church. It is the influence of individuals that introduces us to ideas, and this can be seen particularly in Mississippi, where a deep cultural and religious parochialism prevailed for generations, causing white Mississippians to see themselves, not as oppressors but as a people besieged. To change ideas, it was first necessary to work for a change in people. But systems and cultures must also be changed; this has been the harder task. My goal has been to highlight the efforts of those, Black and white, who worked for these changes from within.

However, as Reinhold Neibuhr reminds us, no human problem is ever fully or finally solved. So, we strive to approximate justice, knowing that the work is never complete, that old battles must be revisited, and that the task is pursued with memory, determination, patience, and love.

This book is a tribute to all who have done this holy work through the years, hopefully making life better for everybody. I would be honored if such folk recognized me as one of their people.

Some Significant Dates

1799 Joseph Bullen becomes first Presbyterian missionary to Mississippi

1817 Mississippi admitted as 21st state

1818 Cyrus Kingsbury begins first ongoing mission to Choctaws

1818 General Assembly urges slavery's abolition

1836 James Smylie publishes "Letter to Chillicothe Presbytery" defending slavery

1836 General Assembly resolves that "all discussion of slavery be "indefinitely postponed"

1845 Harrison Ellis and family sent as missionaries to Liberia

1855 New School Assembly declares slaveholding a bar to membership

1857 New School minister Wm Holley tried in Mississippi for owning slaves

1861 Mississippi secedes from Union

1861 Large planter Presbyterian elder David Hunt frees his slaves

1869 Military rule ends in Mississippi

1870 Presbyterian minister Hiram Revels elected state's first Black senator

1878 Yellow fever decimates Mississippi

1890 New state constitution enshrines segregation

1892 Mary Holmes College established

1899 PCUS Assembly condemns mob activity

1900 Black minister C. B. Scott received byNorth Mississippi Presbytery

1901 Segregated Black Presbytery set off from Synod of Mississippi

1913 Dwyn Milton Mounger intercedes to stop lynching at Collins, Miss.

1919 Pastor C. W. Grafton confronts lynching in Union Church community

1924 Evangelist Billy Sunday preaches in Jackson—hosts unofficial "Klan night"

1924 Minister's son John M. Mecklin writes book exposing Ku Klux Klan

1927 Blacks forced to camp on levee during disastrous Mississippi River flood

1933 Synod begins new Black churches

1942 Segregationist *Southern Presbyterian Journal* begins publication

1954 PCUS Assembly supports Supreme Court school desegregation decision

1954 Oxford First Church resolves that Black worshipers should be welcomed

1954 Former Belhaven president G. T. Gillespie presents paper to Synod arguing Bible teaches Black subservience

1955 Segregationist Presbyterian leaders support Mississippi White Citizens' Council

1955 The Rev. Marsh Callaway forced from pulpit after defending Providence Farm

1961 Freedom Riders arrive in Mississippi

1962 Oxford pastors Murphey Wilds and Cliff McKay urge calm as James Meredith is admitted to Ole Miss

1962 Mac Hart rejected by Central Presbytery for views opposing segregation

1963 UPUSA ministers promote voter registration in Hattiesburg

1963 Jackson church visit campaign begins; Presbyterian minister supporters were fired upon

1963 Reformed Seminary organized; segregation leaders among founders; school later opens doors to all

1964 Civil rights workers Goodman, Cheney, and Schwerner murdered; Schwerner's only civil rights activity in state was to promote church desegregation in Meridian

1964 Billy Graham declines to preach in Jackson due to segregation requirements

1964 New PCUS Covenant Life Curriculum con-demned for discussions of racial justice

1964 PCUS Book of Church Order amended to forbid segregated church seating

1964 Hattiesburg ministers travel to Illinois to explain to UPUSA support for segregation

1964 Congress passes Civil Rights Act

1965 Congress passes Voting Rights Act

1966 Belhaven desegregated

1966 General Assembly appoints special committee to visit Mississippi

1967 Black presbyteries merged with white counterparts

1968 Prof. A. H. Freundt of RTS, former writer for Citizens' Council magazine, changes views to advocate for assimilation of Black congregations into Central Presbytery

1973 Prof. Morton Smith publishes book, *How Is the Gold Become Dim?* opposing PCUS Assembly, supporting segregation

1973 PCA denomination organized; many favoring segregation

1990 Presbyterian deacon Earl Johnston publishes book regretting work with pro-segregation State Sovereignty Commission

2004 PCA Assembly apologizes for slavery

2005 Interracial PCA Redeemer Church organized in Jackson

2016 PCA Mississippi Valley Presbytery; also First Presbyterian, Hattiesburg (PCA), encourage racial reconciliation

Acknowledgements

No historian works without assistance, and that is certainly true in the case of this project. Thanks are due to many archives and libraries, including the Belhaven University Library, Jackson, Mississippi; the Columbia Theological Seminary Library, Decatur, Georgia; the C. W. Capps Archive at Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi; the Memphis Public Library; Memphis Theological Seminary Library; the Paul Barret Jr. Library, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee; the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Jackson; the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; the Presbyterian Heritage Center, Montreat, North Carolina; the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Theodore Sedgwick Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey; the PCA Historical Society, St. Louis; the Princeton Seminary Archives; the Reformed Theological Seminary Library, Jackson; Union Presbyterian Seminary Library, Richmond; and the Ned McWhorter Library at the University of Memphis.

I acknowledge, in particular, the assistance of Joyce (Mrs. Emett) Barfield of Lexington, Kentucky; the Rev. Erskine Clarke of Columbia Seminary; the late the Rev. John C. Dudley of the Presbytery of Mississippi; Dr. Carolyn Renée Dupont of Eastern Kentucky University; Dr. Jennifer Ford, senior curator, archives and manuscript collections, University of Mississippi Archives and Special Collections, Oxford; the late the Rev. A. H. Freundt, Jr., stated clerk of the Synod of Living Waters; Mrs. Lillian Hammond of Memphis, Tennessee; the late the Rev. Richard T. Harbison of Lynchburg, Virginia; the late the Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, pastor of the Idlewild Presbyterian Church in Memphis; Mrs. Ellen Kellum and the archive in the offices of St. Andrew Presbytery, Oxford; the Rev. Dr. Sean Michael Lucas, pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Memphis; Dr. Carter Dalton Lyon of St. Mary's Episcopal School in Memphis; the Rev. William Graeber McAtee of Lexington, Kentucky; the Rev. Cliford R. McKay of Orlando, Florida; the late Norman B. McKenzie Sr., elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Holly Springs, Mississippi; the late the Rev. Stephen R. Montgomery, pastor of the Idlewild Presbyterian Church in Memphis; the late the Rev. Dwyn Mecklin Mounger of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi; the staff of the C. Benton Kline Archive and Special Collections at Columbia Seminary; the Rev. Nicholas B. Phillips, pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church, Biggersville, Mississippi; the Rev. George Robertson pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis; Ron Vinson at the Presbyterian Heritage Center at Montreat; the late Alice Thomason (Mrs. Robert H.) Walkup of Auburn, Alabama and Montreat; the Rev. Iain Whyte of the Scottish Church History Society, the late the Rev. Murphey C. Wilds of Oxford, and, of course, the staff at Xlibris Publishers.

I have also profited from the advice and encouragement of the Rev. David S. Price of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Mr. W. Wilson Golden of Gainesville, Georgia; Professor Joseph Richard Hurt, Winter Springs, Florida; the Rev. Jonathan B. Krogh, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, La Grange, Illinois; Dr. Timothy S. Huebner, vice-president for academic affairs and provost of Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee; and the Rev. President David T. Irving of Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

Finally, I am grateful for the interest and encouragement of Mississippi's former governor, the late the Honorable William F. Winter, which has made completion of this effort an honor and a joy. This book, of course, contains my own interpretation of events and does not represent the position or views of any church governing body or organization. Last of all, I wish to thank the Rev. Dr. James McClanahan for his assistance in preparing the Index.

Part One

Slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction

Mississippi's First Protestant Settlers Brought Slaves

On August 9, 1773, a little less than three years before the Declaration of Independence was signed, with its soaring declaration that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, among them Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," the first Calvinists arrived in the territory that would become the state of Mississippi. These were the families of Richard and the Rev. Samuel Swayze, along with 15 other families, numbering 76 individuals—known as the New Jersey settlers—among them 29 adults, 39 children, three apprentices, and five slaves. The Swayzes were British loyalists, and the writers of the Declaration likely did not envision the extension of these unalienable rights to their slaves, but in the passing of time, the Swayzes would become patriotic Americans, and Mississippi's white Calvinists would enter upon a centuries-long struggle to reconcile their treatment of African Americans with the affirmations of their founding national documents as well as the teaching of their scriptures.

The Swayzes brought their families and other settlers up the Mississippi from New Orleans in 1773 to settle on the banks of the Homochitto River in Adams County, near the present village of Kingston. There they established a community known as the Jersey Settlement, and Samuel Swayze, a Congregationalist minister of the New England Calvinist tradition, preached to a flock gathered near his home. Several Presbyterians were among their number, including John Bolls, "a native Irishman," (that is, Scots-Irish, from Ireland) who had been ordained an elder in the Hopewell Church of Florence County, South Carolina. Swayze was the first Protestant minister to settle in what is now Mississippi, and his was the first Protestant church to be organized.[1]

The Presbyterian Church in Mississippi owes its beginnings and much of its up-building throughout the 19th century to missionary endeavor and financial support of the wider Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America had been a self-governing entity since the first American presbytery was organized in 1706 and thus, unlike some other communions, was better able to adapt itself to changing conditions. At its second meeting, the nascent Presbytery of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, directed, "That every minister of the Presbytery supply neighbouring and desolate places where a minister is wanting, and opportunity of doing good offers." With gifts from Presbyterians in England, Ireland, and Scotland, the effort began.

[1] John G. Jones, *A Concise History of the Introduction of Protestantism into Mississippi and the Southwest* (St. Louis: P. M. Pinkard, 1866): 14-17, 231, 248-49; "History of Presbyterianism in Mississippi," 6-10; Frances Preston Hill, *The History of the Descendants of the Jersey Settlers of Adams County, Mississippi*, 2 vols. (Jackson: Hederman Bros., 1981): 1:23-170; See also James R. *Atkinson, The Bolls Site: An Early American Period Occupation of the Natchez Trace, Old Natchez District, Adams County, Mississippi* (Tallahassee, Fla.: Southeast Archeological Center, 1987).

Following the organization of the first synod[2] in 1717, a "fund for pious uses" was established, designed not only for the relief of widows and orphans of deceased ministers, but also to support missionary work on the frontier and to assist in the organization of congregations there. Among the early missionaries were ministers appointed to labor among the Native American peoples. These early years set the pattern that would bring the Presbyterian Church to Mississippi.[3]

Calvinists were by no means the first to bring slaves to Mississippi. The early Spanish explorers routinely burned villages and killed Indian warriors who opposed them. They also enslaved the indigenous peoples as porters and took captured women as concubines. But slavery and the Presbyterian Church grew together in Mississippi. Some of the first missionaries owned slaves, and many of the Presbyterian settlers brought slaves.[4]

Following their denominational organization as a self-sustaining body in 1789, American Presbyterians gave themselves to missions on the frontier. The area beyond the Appalachians, then called "the West" or "Southwest," was the scene of much effort until the Louisiana Purchase opened a new and even larger "West." Once the vast lands beyond the Mississippi were opened for settlement, national interest in the mid-Mississippi Valley only increased. Then, in 1811, when Captain Nicholas Roosevelt proved that a steamboat could successfully descend and ascend the Mississippi River, the vehicle for development of the area and exploitation of its seemingly endless resources was in place. People began arriving in Mississippi in ever-greater numbers, bringing slaves with them or purchasing them from dealers who trafficked in human beings as if they were farm animals or merchandise.[5]

Presbyterians came to Mississippi along two routes: up the Mississippi River and down the Natchez Trace, so that the initial scenes of Presbyterian settlement took place at opposite ends of the territory. Early work was carried on in and around Natchez to the south, and among the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations to the north. Indeed, the first Presbyterians to come to what is now Mississippi arrived as missionaries to the Indians.[6]

Mississippi's Indians Also Practiced Slavery

The Indians also practiced slavery.[7] The Mississippi Indians wore Euro-American clothing, lived in log houses, used plows and wagons, herded cattle, grew cotton, and owned slaves. Biracial settlers comprised a significant

[2] According to Presbyterian polity, the Church is governed by three (or four) governing councils—in ascending order—the session (or elders, *presbuteroi* in Greek)—then presbyteries followed by synods—and, finally, the General Assembly. The synod was the highest governing body in colonial times, and always has been in the A.R.P. Church, while after the ecclesiastical realignments of the late 20th century, both the PCA and EPC eliminated synods. Cumberland Presbyterians include synods in their governing structure.

[3] Clifford Merrill Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama: One Hundred and Fifty Years of National Missions History* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1952): 3-9; cf. James H. Smylie: *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Louisville, Ky.: Geneva Press, 1996); D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of Presbyterianism in America* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishers, 2007); Bradley J. Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture: A History* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2013).

[4] See William Yoo, *What Kind of Christianity: A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Kohn Knox, 2022). Yoo points out that a minority of Presbyterians supported slavery, and though the practice came to a head in the Civil War, over a long span of years, the majority of Presbyterians came to oppose slavery, and later, racism.

[5] See J. F. H. Claiborne, *Mississippi, As a Province, Territory and State* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964); Thomas D. Clark and John D. W. Guice, *Frontiers in Conflict: The Old Southwest, 1795-1830* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

[6] Duane K. Hale and Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaw*, Frank W. Porter, III, ed., *Indians of North America* (New York: Chelsea House, 1991): 44.

[7] See Barbara Krauthhamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

minority among the Native American population. Forming a kind of elite among the Indians, the mixed-race settlers also owned African Americans.[8]

During the late 17th and 18th centuries, the First Peoples across the Southeast had become victims of slave raids. Members of the larger tribes preyed on weaker groups, using the profits from their exploits to purchase muskets, hatchets, knives, and other household goods from French and English traders. The Chickasaws were one of the first Mississippi tribes targeted by the Indian slave trade, as raiding parties from Carolina came in search of victims. Captives were taken from their homes and families, never to be seen again. Some were sent to the Caribbean. By the close of the 17th century, the Indian slave trade encompassed the entire Southeast. The slave trade also spread smallpox among the Southeastern tribes.[9]

By the turn of the 18th century, the Chickasaws were firmly allied with English traders. They turned to slave catching to purchase English goods. Slave raids on Choctaw villages fostered bitter enmity between the two nations. Hundreds of Choctaws died while their Chickasaw captors herded hundreds more on the 500-mile journey to slave markets in the east. The French supplied the Choctaws and other tribes with weapons to defend themselves against the British, using the Native Americans as a buffer to protect their settlements in Illinois and Louisiana. French relations with the Choctaws were never secure, and the English attempted to capture their trade and allegiance, creating a division in the tribe.[10]

The French population at Natchez in this period was about 400. Seeking retribution for atrocities committed in 1723 by Bienville, the French governor, the Natchez killed 229 colonists and an unknown number of African slaves. Eventually, the French enlisted some of the Choctaws to attack the Natchez, many of whom were captured and taken to New Orleans, where they died or were sold into slavery. This greatly diminished the numbers of the Natchez tribe.[11] By the 1780s, there were about 13,000 white, 16,000 African slaves, and around 1,000 free Blacks in the French controlled territories.[12]

The area was ruled by the French from 1699 to 1763. Then, in the aftermath of the French and Indian War, leading up to the American Revolution, from 1763 to 1783, the area was administered under the British flag. From 1783 to 1798, the territory was under Spanish dominion, after which, by terms of the Treaty of San Lorenzo, the Natchez District became part of the United States. In 1795, Spain gave up its claims to the territory above the 31st parallel, and three years later, Congress created the Mississippi Territory. In 1800, Spain ceded its claims to the Louisiana Territory to France, although Spain retained control of its territory below the 31st parallel until 1819. In 1803, Napoleon sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States, creating immense interest in settlement by land-hungry residents of the states along the Atlantic.

Spanish rule over Mississippi persisted for 15 years in spite of insistent claims to the territory from Atlantic coastal states such as Georgia and South Carolina. The raising of the American flag over Fort Rosalie after the Spanish evacuated, March 29, 1798, not only brought religious freedom to the Mississippi Territory, but also an influx of American settlers. Mississippi became a destination in what has been called the Great Migration,[13] as settlers poured into newly opened territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. Religious bodies took notice and

[8] James F. Barnett Jr., *Mississippi's American Indians* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi for the Mississippi Historical Society and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 2012): 166; W. F. Jeltz, "The Relations of Negroes and Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians," *Journal of Negro History* 33 (January 1948): 24-37.

[9] Barnett, *Mississippi's American Indians,* 67-68, 70-72, 103.

[10] Barnett, *Mississippi's American Indians,* 86-87, 105.

[11] Barnett, *Mississippi's American Indians,* 1226; see John H. Kennedy, *Jesuit and Savage in New France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

[12] Barnett, *Mississippi's American Indians,*149, 159; Daniel H. Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998): 61, 64, 71, 77, Table 1.

[13] James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University Press, 1989); Nicholas Lemann: *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Random House/ Vintage Books, 1991); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House/Vintage Books, 2010).

sent missionaries. By 1785, more and more Americans were eying the rich lands west of the Appalachians. But the path by which this land might be claimed was unclear. Continued Spanish claims to territory along the Mississippi River, as well as Georgia's claims to territory in Mississippi under the banner of states' rights, led President John Adams and Congress to create the Mississippi Territory on April 7, 1798. In 1817, the Territory of Mississippi was admitted to statehood. Three years later, it reported a population of 75,000, of whom 32,814 were slaves.

The Rev. Joseph Bullen Conducts First Presbyterian Ministry to Slaves in Mississippi

The first Presbyterian ministry on behalf of African American people in Mississippi occurred in the summer of 1799, in connection with a mission to the Indians carried on under the auspices of the New York Missionary Society, sponsored by the Presbyterians of that state, which commissioned the Rev. Joseph Bullen of Vermont and his teenaged son to work among the Chickasaws "on the western borders of the State of Georgia."

Bullen preached to Chickasaw gatherings, to attentive, if uncomprehending audiences. He recorded that the Indian houses were made of poles, plastered with mortar, floored with earth, and covered with clapboards. He observed that labor was done by the women and hunting by the men. The Chickasaws raised corn, sunflowers, peas, beans, squash, pumpkins, melons, and tobacco. Women and children, along with slaves, did the agricultural work. Bullen attempted some conversation with them. At Levi Colbert's on a beautiful June morning, Bullen preached to about 20 who met him dressed in their Sunday best. After reading several passages from the New Testament, Bullen explained to them "the character and great love of Christ, that he loves poor Blacks as well as others; told them how we should love Christ, and how a poor woman washed his feet with her tears."

The missionaries visited white settlers living in the territory. On August 11, 1799, soon after arriving in the Mississippi Territory, Bullen baptized five slaves owned by James Gun, a white man who lived along the Natchez Trace, the first recorded baptisms by a Presbyterian in Mississippi.[14] Giving sermons wherever he could gain a hearing, Bullen noted that on August 21, "the Negroes appeared to have the most serious impressions of any who heard me."[15]

African Slaves Formed the Largest Segment in Services Conducted in Indian Territory

Other missions followed. Cyrus Kingsbury and his wife Sarah Varnum were missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), an agency supported by Presbyterians. The Kingsburys came with others to Mississippi in 1818 to work among the Choctaws. Several mission stations were established, and both Indians and African Americans were objects of interest. Kingsbury's life and ministry illustrates the complicated parameters under which missionaries worked in their attempts to minister to Native Americans on the developing frontier. He had few examples to guide him—more often lessons to be learned from earlier missteps than positive results to emulate. The Kingsburys worked with monies provided by the federal government. But the government's aims were not the same as those that motivated the missionaries. Almost immediately, Kingsbury and his associates found themselves in conflict with their native hosts. The Choctaws were eager for schools—paid for with government monies—but they did not wish to change their religion. The workers found that the greatest receptivity to their spiritual message came from Choctaws who had intermarried with whites, as well as Black slaves owned by the Choctaws and the whites who were already in the area. This served to distance the missioners from the full-blood members of the Choctaw community, persons who were not as prosperous as whites, nor as

[14] See Robert Milton Winter, "A Mission to the Indians," in *Outposts of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians in the Nineteenth Century* (Memphis: Alphagraphics, 2021): 25-67.

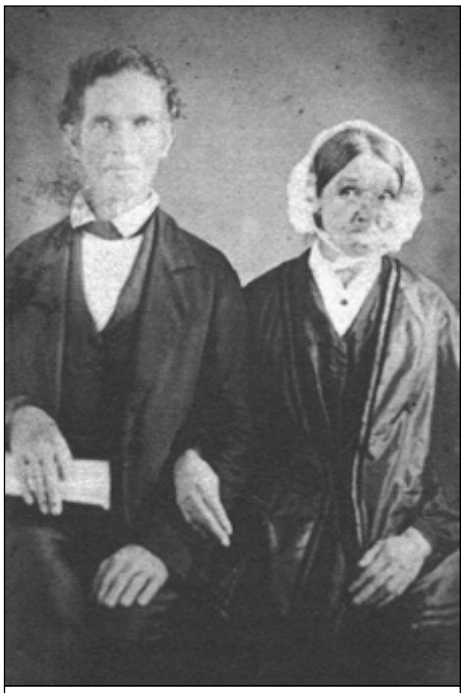
[15] Otis W. Pickett, a Presbyterian historian who earned his Ph.D. at the University of Mississippi and taught at Mississippi College, has written about missions to Native Americans and Blacks in the 19th century. See *Southern Shepherds, Savage Wolves: Presbyterian Domestic Missionaries and Race in South Carolina, 1802-1874* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2025).

open to educational efforts and who, by and large, did not own slaves. The missionaries thus found a niche, but it was not necessarily the group that either they or the government had in mind.[16]

The Choctaw and Cherokee Indians, among whom these first American missioners served, had adopted African slavery from their white neighbors, so that when missionaries began their labors among them, a dilemma about slavery appeared. If the missioners acquiesced to slavery, they would be permitted to work among the Native Americans, but if they opposed it, their work would be impeded. Kingsbury felt it was more important to win Indian souls and temporized on the slave question.[17]

A mission station on Oktibbeha Creek (near Starkville), called Mayhew, emerged as the principal locus of the Kingsburys' work. A church was organized there on May 6, 1821. The Mayhew Church, within ten years of its organization, had received 284 members by profession of faith. Of these 256 were Choctaws, 20 were white, and 8 were slaves.[18]

Another congregation was organized in November 1822 called Bethel. Again, those who showed the greatest religious interest were other whites, persons of mixed ancestry, Choctaw women, and slaves. Yet another church, called Hebron, was organized in January 1828. There, two Choctaws, one white man, one Black man living in the nation, and two white persons from the neighboring white settlements were received.



The Rev. and Mrs. Cyrus Kingsbury—Presbyterian Historical Society

The missionaries needed more help with the operation of their farms and homes than the labor of students or the missionaries themselves could supply. In the antebellum South, slaves were seen as the only alternative. But the possibility of purchasing slaves for the mission raised a wrenching moral dilemma, for the ABCFM condemned slaveholding, which had become a topic of national controversy with the ratification by Congress of the Missouri Compromise in 1820. To make matters worse, a number of whites and biracial persons in the Choctaw Nation owned slaves. The full-blood Choctaws were small farmers and generally did not own slaves. Choctaw historian Clara Sue Kidwell notes that in the colonial period, they had captured Chickasaws to sell as slaves to the French, but there was a general feeling against slavery among the full-blood members of the tribe. Another possibility was to hire slaves owned by others. The missionaries decided, after "agitated" discussion, not to hire slaves. Blacks, however, constituted the largest single group in the worshiping congregations. Eventually, the missionaries decided to scale back the mission farms rather than embrace slavery.[19]

As whites—many Presbyterians among them—pressed ever more eagerly for land that formerly belonged to the Indians, the missionaries were divided. Some supported removal of the Indians to make way for settlers. But

[16] Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 18181918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995): 28-29; see William G. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," *American Quarterly* 26 (October 1974): 367-85.

[17] See Spencer C. Murray, "Starkville Presbyterians: The First One Hundred Years" (unpublished typescript, not dated): 2; Joseph Tracy, *History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (2nd ed., New York: M. W. Dodd, 1842): 111-12; Arthur H. DeRosier Jr., "Pioneers with Conflicting Ideas: Christianity and Slavery in the Choctaw Nation," *Journal of Mississippi History* 21 (July 1959): 174-89; Robert T. Lewit, "Indian Missions and Anti-Slavery Sentiment: A Conflict of Evangelical and Humanitarian Ideals," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 50 (June 1963-March 1964): 39-45.

[18] Murray, "Starkville Presbyterians," 10.

[19] [14] Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi*, 80, 81, 83; see William L. Heimstra, "The Disruptive Effects of the Negro Slavery Controversy upon the Presbyterian Missions Among the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians," *Westminster Theological Journal* 11 (1949): 123-32; Barbara Krauthammer, *Black Slaves and Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 64, 68.

the Choctaws were deeply opposed to parting with their land. In 1829, the Presbyterian synod and the missionaries stood with the Choctaws when President Jackson sent agents to negotiate a treaty with them.[20] Most of the Indians were eventually removed to what is now Oklahoma, but some of the Choctaw leaders, among them men such as Greenwood Leflore, went on to become important in the ongoing life of Mississippi. The help of a Black slave who could interpret.[21] Bullen tried to speak a word of grace to the slaves.[22] He served in the legislature and worked a 15,000-acre plantation with 400 slaves at his palatial home, Malmaison, between the present towns of Carrollton and Greenwood.[23]

In 1820, the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia commissioned Thomas C. Stuart, a 25-year-old candidate for the ministry, to visit the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, and select a promising location for a mission.[24] By this time, the Chickasaws were largely a settled people and owned many slaves. With his wife Susan, Stuart began work in Mississippi in 1821, and a church called Monroe (named for the U. S. President) was organized in 1823. Thomas Stuart's first convert was a slave woman named Dinah, who was his interpreter for several years. An important member of the mission's leadership, the Rev. William C. Blair, joined the Stuarts in 1825. He began a work in what is now Marshall County at a site named Martyn (after the famed missionary Henry Martyn). The following year, he was married to Susan Mueller, who became his fellow worker in the missionary endeavor at Martyn. Another missionary, James Holmes, who served with his wife Sara Anna, gave this account of a religious council, involving leaders of the Chickasaw Nation, July 3-6, 1829. It featured sermons by the Rev. Cyrus Byington, another of the mission workers, the exercises rich with the flavor of American evangelical revivalism.

> On Saturday, the session convened, and seven persons were received into the church, three of whom were from the neighborhood of Martyn. Four were Chickasaws and three black people. On Sabbath the memorials of Christ's sufferings and death were set out in view of the poor perishing heathen, and nearly 100 of his professed followers were permitted to celebrate his dying love. Mr. Byington preached frequently and was well understood. Tahoka exhorted and prayed with the greatest fervency, and his labors were evidently blessed of God. On Sabbath afternoon, all who were in an anxious state of mind were asked to come forward and occupy seats provided for the purpose in front of the pulpit. About 30 presented themselves, the majority of whom were black people.[25]

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[20] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama (November 12, 1829); see George E. Lankford, "Trouble at Dancing Rabbit Creek: Missionaries and Choctaw Removal," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 62 (Spring 1984): 51-66; Arthur H. DeRosier Jr., *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970): 116-28.

[21] "Journal of the Rev. Joseph Bullen," in *The New York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence* 1 (1800): 262-272, 365-75; reprinted in Dawson A. Phelps, ed., "Excerpts from the Journal of the Reverend Joseph Bullen, 1799 and 1800," *Journal of Mississippi History* 17 (1955): 254-81.

[22] Because the Native Americans of Mississippi were removed to the Indian Territory, there were close ties between the Native American Presbyterians in Mississippi and those who evangelized them and the Indian Missions of Oklahoma. See Michael Cassity and Danney Goble, *Divided Hearts: The Presbyterian Journey Through Oklahoma History* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press 2009): 3-29.

[23] James Taylor Carson, "Greenwood LeFlore: Southern Creole, Choctaw Chief," *Journal of Mississippi History* 65 (Winter 2003): 355-73.

[24] See Ashbel Green, *Presbyterian Missions* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1893): 65. Stuart recounted these events late in life in a series of letters written at the request of the editor of *The Southern Presbyterian*, published at Columbia, S. C., June to August 1861, for the purpose of recording his historical reminiscences. They are reprinted in George Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 2 vols. (Columbia: W. J. Duffie, 1883): 2:429-46, and later in E. T. Winston, *Father Stuart and the Monroe Mission* (Pontotoc: Tell Farmer Press, 1927): 66-91. See also, "Father T.C. Stuart, the Monroe Mission and the Chickasaw of North Mississippi, 1822-1830." in *Native South* (Lincoln, Neb., University of Nebraska Press). The University of Nebraska Press. Summer 2015 edition. https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/native_south/toc/nso.8.html

[25] Tracy, *History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,* 220-21.

As noted, the Chickasaws owned Black slaves, and the Presbyterian missionaries, taking an official position of neutrality on the question of Indian ownership of slaves, worked with the bondspeople as well as their Chickasaw owners. The missionaries found that the Blacks were helpful as interpreters for Africans who had been purchased from white traders. These spoke English, and had learned the Chickasaw language from their current masters.[26] The missionaries repeatedly noted that slaves were more receptive to the Christian message. Many would walk miles to attend a service. They were among the earliest members of the mission churches. Cornelia Pelham wrote of an effective mission to the Chickasaws at Monroe conducted wholly by a slave:

> A black man who belonged to the mission church, opened his little cabin for prayer, on the evening of every Wednesday, which was usually attended by half a dozen colored persons. . . . [In the spring of 1830], the number suddenly increased, till more than 50 assembled at once, many of whom were full Indians. The meetings were conducted wholly by Christian slaves, in the Chickasaw language. One of their number can read fluently in the Bible, and many of the others can sing hymns, which they have committed to memory from hearing them sung and recited. The chiefs began to manifest increasing regard for the schools and religious instruction. They also enacted many excellent laws which they enforced with great spirit and promptness.[27]

The church roll at Monroe indicates that eight of the first 13 members were white, four were Black, and only one was Native American. During the next decade, 180 were baptized, 123 of whom became communicant members. Of these, 69 were black, 29 white, and 25 were Native American.

Like the Choctaws, the Chickasaws were also removed west. Since whites had found the soil of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana especially suitable for growing cotton, they made demands for greater and greater portions of the land owned by Native Americans. The federal government yielded to the settlers' desires, and although the missionaries generally opposed the removals, there was little that they could do. On January 19, 1830, Mississippi abolished the Chickasaw Nation's government and laws, extending state law to the Indian country, making it a misdemeanor to claim the office of chief and declaring the Chickasaw leaders subject to fines or imprisonment if they attempted to govern their people. The Chickasaws quickly saw that they either had to accept the territory offered in the West or stand by helplessly as squatters moved onto their lands.[28]

White Settlers Brought Slaves to Indian Cessions in the "Great Migration"

The financial panic of 1819 had slowed the Great Migration to the lands west of the Appalachians, but in the 1830s, it swelled again. Land could be purchased in North Mississippi for $1.25 an acre. A boom ensued as land agents flocked to the area, followed soon by cotton planters and their slaves. In the decade of the 1830s, some

[26] In general, the American Board opposed slaving among the Indian tribes with which it worked, whereas the Presbyterian Board tolerated it. Missionaries who were willing to work among the slaveholding Native Americans eventually gravitated to the Presbyterian Board. After the Chickasaws moved to Oklahoma, the Presbyterian missionaries kept slaves, using their labor to build schools for the Indians. See William G. McLoughlin, "Indian Slaveholders and Presbyterian Missionaries, 1837-1861," *Church History* 42 (December 1973): 535-51.

[27] Pelham's account is preserved in [Sara Tuttle], *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1831): 10-11; *Missionary Herald* 26 (1830): 15.

[28] Hale and Gibson, *The Chickasaw*, 48-49; James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004): 220; see James Taylor Carson, "State Rights and Indian Removal in Mississippi: 1817-1835," *Journal of Mississippi History* 57 (February 1995): 36. Hugh Wilson wrote that those who opposed the missionaries even accused them of creating the impression that their work was successful by hiring the natives "to become communicants, by the presents of blankets and other gifts." *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate* 3 (July 3, 1830): 2.

7,000,000 acres of land were sold within the state,[29] and as Charles Ramsdell has explained, the phenomenal development of the new Southwest was easily explained:

> Cotton was not only a reliable cash crop, since it sold readily in the world market, it was also normally the most profitable of all crops on good soil. [But] slaves were essential to large planting units; [and] the routine of new plantations required constant labor. A steady and adequate supply of free white labor could not be procured on this frontier where even the poorest white man could always get land to cultivate for himself. The large landowner must have Negroes or leave his fields unplanted. . . . Thus, the plantation system continued. The successful cotton grower found that the most promising investment for the profits from his crop was in more land and more labor. It was, in fact, almost the only one open to him. Thus, the plantation system continued to expand, and the lower South was committed to cotton and to slave labor by economic forces beyond its control.[30]

Although the Chickasaw leaders had agreed to the sale of their tribal lands and removal to the West, the vast majority of the people did not wish to leave their homes. A long delay ensued between the cession of the Chickasaw lands and their removal, during which thousands of white settlers entered the former Chickasaw territory. A land office was opened in 1834 at Pontotoc, a new white settlement seven miles northwest of the old Chickasaw village of Pontetok. As late as January 1836, as the first Chickasaw lands were being auctioned, there were still 6,070 individuals in the Chickasaw Nation to be removed to the Indian Territory. Of these, 4,914 were Native Americans and 1,156 were slaves.

Some of the missionaries to the Indians transferred their work to the slaves. On December 29, 1830, when removal of the Indians seemed imminent, William Blair was released from his labors at Martyn to serve as a missionary to slaves on plantations near Natchez. Joseph and Hannah Bullen (she had come with her husband to Mississippi on his second mission to the Chickasaws in 1801) also moved to Natchez, where he and Hannah spent 25 years working among the slaves of wealthy Presbyterian planters.[31] Thomas Stuart went to Oklahoma with the Indians for two years (1837-1839), but believed his place was in Mississippi with those who remained near Monroe Church. He continued to preach to the white and Black members of the Monroe congregation until prevented by declining health in 1873.

The flow of whites into North and Central Mississippi was part of a phenomenon called the Flush Times. It was an era that depended on slavery and easy credit. Joseph Glover Baldwin has written that

> The country was just settling up. Marvelous accounts had gone forth of the fertility of its virgin lands; and the productions of the soil were commanding a price remunerating to slave labor as it had never been remunerated before. Emigrants came flocking in from all quarters of the Union, especially from the slaveholding States. . . . Money, or what passed for money, was the only cheap thing to be had."[32]

Most white settlers who emigrated from points North and East took little note of the fact that the land they had purchased had been taken from the Indians and that many of the displaced Native Americans were communicant members of the Presbyterian Church—the church to which many of the more prominent settlers adhered. Still less were the slaves of the Native Americans remembered.

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[29] John Edmond Gonzales, "Flush Times, Depression, War, and Compromise," in Richard Aubrey McLemore, ed., *A History of Mississippi*, 2 vols. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1973), 1:284-89.

[30] Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Southern Heritage," in W. T. Couch, ed., *Culture in the South* (New York: Friendship Press, 1936): 2.

[31] Winston, *Father Stuart and the Monroe Mission,* 22; Percy L. Rainwater, "Indian Missions and Missionaries," *Journal of Mississippi History* 28 (1966): 36.

[32] Joseph G. Baldwin, *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi, A Series of Sketches* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1854): 82-89.

During the period when some Chickasaw families delayed moving to the Indian Territory, Native Americans were part of Presbyterian congregations organized by white settlers at Holly Springs and Lamar in 1836 and 1847. One of the most prominent Chickasaw leaders, James Colbert, a son of James Logan Colbert, who owned extensive property, including slaves, was a member of the Holly Springs Church, and then in December 1842 was given a letter of dismission as he moved to Oklahoma.

Another such Native American family was headed by Benjamin Love. Benjamin Love, now referred to by local citizens as "Colonel Love," had become the richest member of his large and influential biracial family. By 1840, he owned 66 slaves and had built a substantial two-story house on a plantation in an area called the Indian Reserve about six miles south of Holly Springs on Spring Creek. His wife, Charlotte, and several of her slaves were members of the Holly Springs Church. The congregations at Holly Springs and Lamar also included Black slaves, so that for a span of years, these Presbyterian churches in North Mississippi were tri-racial, with whites, African Americans, and Native Americans worshiping together. Booming North Mississippi had survived the panic of 1837, but cotton prices hit bottom in the spring of 1840, so that the next year, Benjamin Love sold his home and plantation. Four years later in the spring of 1844, Henry and Benjamin Love led a sizeable party of their relatives, friends, and African slaves westward to the Indian Territory, where they once more exercised great influence in tribal affairs.

From *A Narrative on the State of Religion in the Mississippi Presbytery*, Adopted November 1, 1823

In a free conversation on the state of religion, facts were brought to view, calculated to excite the emotions of joy and of sorrow. In the bounds of the Mississippi Presbytery. . . . The Sabbath is grossly profaned. It is not unusual to see carts and wagons traveling on the Sabbath as well as on other days—Shooting is practiced, in some places, on this holy day. Indeed, in some parts, the Sabbath is scarcely known. . . . Profane swearing is practiced by many. The sacred name of God is abused to the vilest purposes. . . . Tippling is too much the fashion of the times. Dram shops are encouraged by many. It is not merely in these places of wickedness that drinking is too much indulged. The sideboards of the more polished are often abused. In connexion with these events, we have to deplore the state of the slaves. Little attention is paid to their religious instruction, even by professors of religion. . . .

Some Mississippi Presbyterian Ministers Owned Slaves

Presbyterians were among the best-paid ministers in Mississippi and, because of their propensity to plant cotton, some ministers became rich. In 1835, the Rev. Joseph Holt Ingraham, after visiting South Mississippi, wrote that, "Here the Presbyterian clergy, unlike those in the Northern states, are generally wealthy. With but a few exceptions, they have, after a short residence in this country, become planters, some of whom have noble annual incomes." Ingraham went on to say, "After retiring to their plantations they do not—and I mention it with pleasure—altogether resign from their ministerial duties. Some of them preach in destitute churches, from time to time; while others regularly officiate to congregations of their own slaves."[33]

Presbyterians, valuing a settled ministry, were willing to pay their clergy a larger sum, but even these ministers often resorted to other work to support themselves and their families. Some, such as the Rev. Joseph Bullen and the Rev. Jacob Rickhow, both Presbyterians in the vicinity of Natchez, farmed. Others, such as the Rev. Daniel L. Gray, founder of the Holly Springs and Hudsonville Presbyterian Churches farther north, purchased slaves to help in the work. Gray purchased a large place a mile south of Ripley where he lived until the end of his life. In

[33] Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The South-West by a Yankee*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1835), 2:67-68.

1860, he owned 33 slaves and many head of cattle.[34] The Rev. Thomas Stuart also owned slaves and supplemented his clerical income by farming.[35]

Slave Galleries Were Early Features of Mississippi Presbyterian Churches

One indicator of the relation between owners and enslaved persons was the construction of churches with galleries for seating the slaves. Although they were found in medieval churches, galleries were primarily for musicians, not the seating of worshipers. In Great Britain, gallery seating was sometimes reserved for privileged persons, including members of the nobility. Later, after the great fire of 1666, the architect Christopher Wren made use of galleries in the London churches he built to accommodate large numbers of people because the city's growing population demanded additional seating. In America, during the 18th and 19th centuries, galleries were mainly used by subservient classes: students, servants, strangers, as well as anyone who could not afford sittings on the ground floor. For example, at Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, students from the College of William and Mary occupied one gallery, while another was reserved for members of the legislature. Needless to say, when a decision had to be made for the best way to accommodate slaves who wished to attend church, it seemed wisest to seat them in a gallery. The relations were, of course, unequal, yet the era had not arisen when it was thought improper for all races to hear the gospel in one assembly. Indeed, in the egalitarian spirit that arose from the Second Great Awakening, Black and white, rich and poor said prayers together in the same evangelical assemblies. Time would change this conviction.

Provision for Black worshipers grew as the slave population increased in Mississippi. In Natchez, at least two Black members were added to the Presbyterian Church's membership roll in the 1820s. As time passed, the number of African American members in the Natchez Church varied from 27 in 1853 to 59 in 1861. When the Pine Ridge Church (1827-1828) was erected, it included a servant's gallery, as did the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez (1828-1829). Not every congregation had a gallery. In 1834, the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia spoke out on behalf of slaves who had to "catch the gospel as it escapes by the doors and windows."[36]

African American slaves were frequently included in Mississippi's religious congregations during the early 19th century. Often, they sat on the ground floor in the rear seats, but larger congregations typically emphasized the social separation of slaves and free persons by demoting slaves to a gallery. In such cases, the slaves entered the building by a separate door, with the stairs to the gallery either outside and barely protected from the weather, or by means of a stairway concealed within the building sometimes entered by a different door than the one used by free persons. Galleries may still be seen in the imposing Presbyterian churches at Natchez, Port Gibson, Rodney, and Holly Springs.

Galleries were also included in smaller churches built in rural areas. One pioneer-era congregation in the Southeast portion of the state was Hopewell Church in the Jaynesville community, six miles west of Mt. Olive. Organized in 1830, the congregation first met in a log schoolhouse. The building consisted of one large room with a pulpit at one end and hewn logs for pews. No musical instrument was to be had, and there was no place provided for slaves. The organization was perfected under the authority of the Rev. Jacob Rickhow, who was at the same time pastor of the nearby Sharon Church. In 1856, the congregation resolved to build its own house of worship with galleries on either side for slaves.[37]

The historic church at College Hill in Lafayette County was originally named Ebenezer. The church, located

[34] See undated obituary notices among the historical papers of the Ripley Presbyterian Church.

[35] E. Brooks Holifield, "The Penurious Preacher? Nineteenth-Century Clerical Wealth, North and South," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (Spring 1990): 17-36

[36] Walter Brownlow Posey, *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1952): 86; J. Julian Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez* (Natchez: McDonald's Printers and Publishers, 1972): 17, 37; *Report of the Committee to which was Referred the Subject of the Religious Instruction of the Colored Population of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia* (Charleston, Published by order of the Synod, 1834): 9.

[37] Jessie Ramsay McAlexander, "History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 1830-1930" (privately published, 1930): 3-4.

about four and a half miles northwest of Oxford, was organized in 1836, by the Rev. Ebenezer McEwen, the year Lafayette County was established. The congregation of 20 included nine African American slaves. The church was renamed College Hill in 1841 in honor of the founding of North Mississippi College in the immediate vicinity.[38] The building originally had a gallery for slaves, with stairs rising from the ground level underneath the front portico to doors at the upper level, similar perhaps to an arrangement still *in situ* at Bethesda Presbyterian Church in Camden, South Carolina. On January 6, 1861, the College Hill session assessed white male members ten cents apiece for each slave he owned "to repair the slaves windows & doors" presumably in the gallery of the church.[39]

Within a year after the founding of the town of Oxford, on July 15, 1837, the First Presbyterian Church was organized in a carpenter's shop with 39 members. The first house of worship was erected in 1843. It was a frame building on the lot where the present church stands. By November of 1847, the building, with a gallery for slaves reached by an outdoor staircase, was completed and in use.[40] Bethel Church in rural Claiborne County, located on one of the region's earliest roads, was organized by the Rev. Samuel Hunter in 1824. The present stucco-on-brick house of worship, of Greek Revival design, was erected about 1845 (and repaired after a tornado in the 1950s). It was originally a reddish color, now weathered to a light pink. The church originally had a gallery for slaves, as well as a tall spire atop its square tower. It has been cited as a prime example of Mississippi's antebellum slaveholding architecture.[41] The 1854 church at Vicksburg, with its Gothic windows, unusual for Presbyterians at the time, stood out among its peers. Interior light came from gas lamps along the walls, as well as a gasolier at the center of the ceiling, and two upright standards on either side of the pulpit. There was a gallery for slaves, and an organ at the center of the loft with seats before it for the choir. The church at Starkville, built probably in 1854 or 1855, was an imposing wood frame structure with classical Greek lines, located where the present church stands, on a rise above the town's main street. A front porch supported by four columns was reached by steps that extended across the front of the building. A set of double doors gave access to the audience room. Inside, there were four tall windows on each side and a gallery in the back for slaves.[42] The Presbyterian Church at Liberty, Mississippi, erected in 1856, still possesses a gallery on a mezzanine floor across the back with an outside entrance. This was used for slave members of the congregation prior to the Civil War.[43]

Slavery Issue Clouded 1837 Old School-New School Presbyterian Division

As the 19th century progressed, the subject of slavery again moved to the fore in the deliberations of the Presbyterian General Assembly. In 1837, the denomination divided into Old and New Schools, and the issue of slavery was among the causes to which the rupture was attributed. The causes of the Presbyterian division were

[38] See Carole Lee, ed., *Early Records of College Hill Church, Lafayette County, Mississippi, with Cemetery Inscriptions* (Carrollton, Miss.: Pioneer Publishing, undated); "History of Presbyterianism in Mississippi," 167; see Will Lewis, "The Founding and Early History of College Hill Presbyterian Church," (research paper, 1985), www.collegehillpca.com/aboutus/history.

[39] Carl Julien and Daniel W. Hollis, *Look to the Rock: One Hundred Antebellum Presbyterian Churches of the South* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963): 110, 141; Carl McIntire and Bob V. Moulder, *Shrines to Tomorrow: A Study of More than One Hundred Historic Churches in Mississippi* (privately published, 1971): [20-21]; Wayne Andrews, *Pride of the South: A Social History of Southern Architecture* (New York: Athenium, 1979): 93. Lee, *Early Records of College Hill Church*, 32.

[40] Maud Morrow Brown, *History of the First Presbyterian Church, Oxford, Miss., July 15, 1837–March 31, 1950* (Oxford: privately printed, 1952): 9-10; "Presbyterians Build Early Churches," *Oxford Eagle,* 90th Anniversary Edition (August 22, 1957): 5.

[41] For details of the church's organization, see *Extracts from the Minutes of the Mississippi Presbytery* (1825): 5-6; see depression-era photos showing original spire in Eudora Welty, *Photographs* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989): 120; Eudora Welty, *Country Churchyards* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000): 99; and Eudora Welty, *Some Notes on River Country* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003): unpaged. Cf. *Shrines to Tomorrow*, [56].

[42] Murray, "Starkville Presbyterians," 24.

[43] *"150 Years of Service:" History of the Liberty Presbyterian Church, Organized November 26, 1848* (Liberty: Southern Herald, Richard H. Stratton, publisher, undated): 1.

complex and also involved matters of doctrine and polity. Of particular concern to certain Southerners were the reputed statements of some Northern New School leaders denouncing slavery. The 1836 Assembly's moderator confided in a letter to a fellow South Carolina that, "It is said that there are 150 abolitionists on the floor of the Assembly." Defenders of slavery were aroused to action, and the Assembly resolved by a sharply divided vote: "That since there existed a great diversity of opinion . . . in the churches represented in this Assembly," and since "any action on the part of the Assembly . . . would tend to distract and divide our churches. . . . That it is not expedient for the Assembly to take any further order in relation to this subject [of slavery]." Even so, Old School partisans, including a disproportionate number of Southerners, began making plans for a division of the Church throughout the year following, continuous propaganda was circulated, alleging that the denomination already existed de facto, as "two churches under one roof," and urging presbyteries to send Old School commissioners to the 1837 Assembly. Slavery obviously played a role in the agitation of these questions.[44] The New School Church, as a body, after the division of 1837, would become increasingly outspoken against slaveholding.[45]

The "Southern" character of the Old School Church committed its ministers in the South to a certain reticence in their criticisms of slaveholding, more so perhaps than was characteristic in other communions, such as the Methodist, which had a larger Northern constituency. Indeed, so many in the Old School Church defended slavery, or at least refused to offer criticism of it, that the Old School Church as a whole was regarded by many as the ecclesiastical protector of slaveholding.

Fully a third of Old School Presbyterians lived in slaveholding states. There were New School congregations in Mississippi, but their adherence to this body had to do with nonspecific theological idiosyncrasies of ministers rather than any tendency toward abolitionist views. When the New School Church, South, was received into the Confederate Presbyterian Church in 1864, the body was so small that the union was achieved almost without remark. The strength of the New School lay in New York, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, and in such Southern locales as East Tennessee where few had slaves. This caused many to say that while Northern New School Presbyterians tended toward abolitionist viewpoints, in the South, preachers of the New School were more often associated with revivalism.

It can be argued that Old School Presbyterians, while not owning the largest number of slaves (this distinction belonged to Episcopalians), were the intellectual leaders of the proslavery forces in the South. This was the task to which the well-educated theologically refined Old School Southern Presbyterian mind largely gave itself in the years 1837-1861. Whereas the Baptist and Methodist Churches had divided into Northern and Southern constituencies by 1845 (the New School Presbyterians followed suit in 1857), only the Old School Presbyterians, the Cumberland Presbyterians, and the Episcopal Church (which eschewed "political" discussions) remained undivided bodies with a wide membership across sectional lines until the Civil War.

New School Presbyterians debated the slavery issue, but it was the Old School Church's large and tenacious Southern membership that perpetuated the debate and sorely tried the nation's soul. Finally, because the Episcopalians met less frequently (only once every three years, and did not meet in 1861), it was the Old School Presbyterians who (with the Democratic Party) were regarded by 1860 as "the two hoops that bound the nation together." Their debates were passionate, and many Presbyterians in Mississippi were articulate partisans for the slaveholding cause. For these reasons, the Old School Presbyterian Church had a disproportionate influence, and the consequences were felt in Mississippi, and across the nation, for generations to come.[46]

The position of the Rev. Daniel Baker, pastor of the Holly Springs Presbyterian Church (1840-1848) was

[44] Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1836): 247-48; see Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3 vols. (Richmond: John Knox, 1963, 1973), 1:377-86.

[45] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (October 30-31, 1837); see Parker, 44.

[46] See C. Bruce Staiger, "Abolitionism and the Presbyterian Schism of 1837-1838," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 26 (December 1949): 391-414; Elwyn Allen Smith, "The Role of the South in the Presbyterian Schism of 1837-1838," *Church History* 29 (March 1966): 44-63; Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Abingdon, 1957); Lewis G. Vander Velde, *The Presbyterian Churches and the Federal Union* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932): 15-21.

typical of Old School Presbyterian ministers, though Baker's views are more worthy of examination because he was an influential person—an evangelist of note, said to have won more to the Church than any other Southern Presbyterian over the course of a long career that took him from Georgia to Colorado with much of his work done in the state of Texas.[47] Though he defended the right to own slaves, Baker had none, and avoided this controversy as much as he could in favor of what he believed was a greater call to be an evangelist. On a preaching tour of Mississippi in the winter of 1844, Baker preached to whites and Blacks in Jackson, but as separate congregations—less perhaps out of a desire to segregate than that the capitol building where he preached could not accommodate all.[48]

The Rev. Daniel Baker preached to black and white and administered the Holy Communion to black worshipers.

—from Baker's *Life and Letters*

Presbyterians Were Practitioners of Church Discipline

It is a commonplace among historians to say that religion helped civilize the frontier. Dancing, gambling, drinking, cursing, brawling, and other amusements were strictly proscribed. The Church saw the will of God clearly in these and other matters that involved individual "sins of the flesh;" however, it was increasingly reluctant to speak with conviction concerning certain other matters of social righteousness, such as the propriety of owning slaves. As time passed, voices were raised in defense of the South's "peculiar institution."

Nineteenth-century Mississippi Presbyterians also practiced corrective discipline. They exercised punitive discipline with neither an amazing number of prosecutions, nor the turning of a blind eye toward infractions in their midst. The sins that called forth rebuke were generally personal, but certain societal matters were addressed. Unlike abolitionists of the North who made slaveholding a bar to communion, Mississippi Presbyterians saw divine displeasure as focused primarily upon certain individual practices and social behaviors. For example, on September 10, 1864, as war raged to abolish slavery in the South, Tombeckbee Presbytery replied to a question posed by the session of its church at Houston, Mississippi as follows:

[47] Princeton Seminary's Archibald Alexander, whose tenure coincided with Baker's at the college claimed that Princetonians pursued "the old moderate plan, teaching the old doctrines of Calvinism, but not disposed to consider every man a heretic who differs in some few points with us." Cited in Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture*, 65. Ernest Trice Thompson wrote of Daniel Baker, that "No Southern preacher, so far as is known, won more converts for the church." E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:429.

[48] See Robert Milton Winter, "Daniel Baker and Old School Revivalism in Mississippi," *American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History* 74 (Winter 1996): 227-40; Robert Milton Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Rock: A Social and Cultural History of Presbyterianism in Marshall County, Mississippi* (Franklin: Tenn., Providence House Publishers, 1997): 65-87; *Outposts of Zion*, 139-60.

> What course should be pursued with members of our church who participate in dancing or with heads of families, in our church, who are known to advocate dancing, in the presence of their children, or to send them to Dancing Schools? Resolved that this Presbytery regards such conduct on the part of any member of our church as wholly inconsistent with the uniform deliverances of the higher Courts of the Church, as well as the word of God and that it demands prompt discipline, according to the circumstances of the case.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, dancing and Sabbath breaking were considered sins that brought down the judgment of God, and dancing schools in particular were considered instruments of evil. Having thus set boundaries that by some accounts helped Christianize the frontier, Mississippi Presbyterians occupied themselves regulating the many and varied peccadilloes that could be classed as human failings or "worldly amusements." Yet, no Mississippi Presbyterian was ever disciplined for the sin of having a slave—and for this reason, the Presbyterians of Mississippi were indicted in the judgment of many Christians elsewhere in the nation and around the world. The Rev. John D. Paxton of Virginia was forced out of his church because of his antislavery views. He felt that it was inconsistent for Christians in the South to condemn dancing and card playing while failing to discipline members who practiced slavery. So far as can be determined, no Mississippi Presbyterian minister was ever forced from his church because of antislavery views, and no state Presbyterian governing body ever took note of slavery as a sin.[49]

When owners of enslaved persons inflicted corporal punishment upon them it was typically described as "discipline."

Efforts to Ameliorate Slavery's Harsh Conditions

It can be said that there were some who, in the context of their times, labored to ameliorate the conditions of slavery, working within the structures of slaveholding as they existed, and profiting no doubt by its preservation, they nonetheless offered a modicum of comfort, perhaps laying a groundwork for emancipation. Margaret Louisa McGehee Burrus, for example, came to the neighborhood of Benoit in the Mississippi Delta in 1839. By the recollection of one of that congregation's historians, "In that untamed wilderness, she would leave her home on cold winter nights and ride for miles on horseback to pray at the bedside of the dying. Many sent for her who only knew her by reputation. She relieved distress whenever she could, and she wielded a great influence for good as long as she lived." Burrus, who lived on an isolated plantation, far from the companionship of other Christians, maintained her faith by devotional readings on the Sabbath, teaching her children and her slaves, and labored for a Presbyterian Church near her home for most of her adult life. Over the course of Burrus's lifetime, the Mississippi Delta became one of the richest agricultural regions in the world, with immense numbers of slaves brought in to harvest the timber and tend the fields. Many of the early plantations were far away from their owners' primary place of residence and left in the care of overseers. Opportunities abounded for cruelty to the slaves.

[49] John D. Paxton, *Letters on Slavery: Addressed to the Cumberland Congregation, Virginia* (Lexington, Ky.: A. T. Skillman, 1833); cited in Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro—A History* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966): 66-67.

John and Louisa Burrus

A diary by a seminarian named Charles Coffin Hart, a New School Presbyterian who had grown up in Indiana and Michigan who served in Mississippi during the early 1850s, gives a picture of efforts made by one Presbyterian to minister to slaves on plantations at the edge of the Mississippi Delta. Hart was a student at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. His initial visit to Mississippi came in the spring of 1851, when he resolved to allot six weeks visiting his brother Samuel in Carrollton. He arrived there on April 15:

> Here I was delayed one day waiting for the stage. Reached Coffeeville Saturday, at 8 p.m. Stayed over the Sabbath. Preached for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Pastor absent. When I reached Carrollton three weeks of my allotted outing was gone. I was invited to stay and preach a few Sabbaths. About the middle of May I was asked to go to Madison County, on the Big Black river, and preach to a country church three months. I made this journey, 75 miles, on horseback, in two days. Found a good church in the midst of cotton planters, with from 10 to 100 slaves on each plantation. After a few Sabbaths I made an arrangement with Major Bowman to preach on alternate Sabbaths in the afternoon on his plantation to 100 slaves, for which I received $5 in gold for each sermon. Thus, I passed the summer in the midst of slavery. The church paid me $80 in gold and invited me to become their pastor, which I declined.[50]

Women also acted on behalf of Black persons in their neighborhoods. On March 18, 1850, Presbyterian women at Natchez contributed $350 toward the erection of a brick chapel near the church building used for a Sabbath school and services for the congregation's African American members.

The 19th century is rightly called the Missionary Century among white Protestant Christians. Millions of dollars and hundreds of workers went to the far corners of the earth, carrying the glad tidings of the gospel. Mississippi Presbyterians happily contributed missionaries and money to the cause. Black members of the state's congregations joined the effort, and in 1844, the slave members of the Hudsonville congregation contributed $3 for foreign missions.

[50] R. A. Bolling papers, Delta State University Archive.

Slavery Debates Became More Intense in Decades Leading to the Civil War

As the Civil War drew closer, the subject of abolition and emancipation became ever more strained. Because the Calvinistic theology of Presbyterians insisted that faith was very much a this-worldly affair involving ethical commitments and requiring strict moral rectitude, the question of faith's relation to politics inevitably arose—yet the line between mere partisanship and the necessity of addressing the civil magistrate (a subject explored in detail in the church's *Confession of Faith*) was often indistinct.

Ministers and church courts frequently fell into controversy over such matters, so that cautious heads counseled restraint. Therefore, on October 2, 1834, Tombeckbee Presbytery resolved that, "The Committee on Missions be instructed to caution their missionaries against introducing the subject of politics in their public addresses." This resolution brought up for the first time in the minutes of Tombeckbee a subject that has divided Presbyterians throughout their history. The scruple against "politics" had become heightened in the aftermath of the bitter 1832 presidential campaign, as well as the South Carolina nullification crisis.

During the summer and fall of 1855, the politicians were discussing plans and candidates for the presidential campaign of 1856. In the interest of slavery, Congress had revoked the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The slaveholders claimed the right to carry their slaves into any territory of the United States, and a desperate effort was made to have Kansas admitted as a slave state. Slave missionary Charles Hart confided to his diary that "the subject of slavery became so prominent in all the affairs of daily life that it became very disagreeable to me. When questioned in private, I always expressed my views of the evils of slavery, but I dared not utter a word in public. I tried to be faithful to all, Black and white, without making myself offensive to any. But I found I could not live in peace without evading or compromising my convictions."

The occasional Mississippi Presbyterian minister cherished abolitionist sentiments. The Rev. William C. Davis of South Carolina along with his congregation had come to East Mississippi where he immediately came into controversy with members of Tombeckbee Presbytery over slavery and other issues. Davis's opposition to slavery (and that of his followers) seems to have played an important role in the controversy. Davis had been ordained in the Presbyterian Church in 1788. As the result of his marriage, he came to possess a slave. Through study of the Bible, he was persuaded that slavery was in conflict with his Christian principles. Several other congregations in Chester and York counties and their ministers withdrew from the South Carolina synods in sympathy with Davis, who spelled out his views, including his abolitionist beliefs, in a work called *The Gospel Plan* (1809). This was promptly denounced by the Presbyterian establishment. The dissenting ministers and congregations formed a body known as the Independent Presbyterian Church, which became well-known in a limited geographical area of South Carolina. In 1864, it united with the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States.

Among the most influential men to support Davis was William D. Feemster, who studied under Davis and followed him into the ministry of the Independent Presbyterian Church. In 1820, Feemster moved his family to Mississippi, where he purchased 1,000 acres and established a colony of family and followers about 16 miles north of Columbus along the Buttahatchie River, near the present community of Caledonia. Feemster's son, Silas Jamison Feemster, also joined the movement, and was ordained to the ministry in 1822. He made several trips from South Carolina to Mississippi to visit his father, including a trip in the spring of 1824, where he "attended a camp meeting of Cumberland Presbyterians in the Chickasaw Nation and administered the communion in the neighborhood of his father." The following year, the younger Feemster married the daughter of William C. Davis. Davis died in 1831, and the mantle of leadership for the Independent Presbyterians fell on S. J. Feemster. A controversy developed between Feemster and some of the others in the movement over the intensity of his opposition to slavery. Feemster was the most ardently anti-slavery and felt alienated from his brethren in the Independent Presbyterian Church. He moved his family to Lowndes County, where they arrived on Christmas

Eve, 1836. Not surprisingly, the Presbyterians already residing in that part of Mississippi did not rest easy with the little abolitionist colony from South Carolina.[51]

Grand Churches Built by Slave Labor in Decade Leading to Civil War

The final decade leading up to the Civil War saw a renewed vigor in building churches—and virtually all perpetuated the use of galleries for the seating of Black worshipers. In keeping with the romanticism that was sweeping the nation, Mississippians of this era often spoke of the churches they loved as old when the buildings might be only 20 or 30 years in age. Thus, it was not surprising that they began to build homes, churches, and other public buildings to look as if they were venerable, employing the lines of Greek temples, Roman basilicas, and Gothic cathedrals. By the 1850s, wealth from cotton growing and railroad building made even more elaborate structures possible, and many Mississippi communities erected expansive public buildings of various sorts. Colleges and banks vied for architectural prominence, and Presbyterians built fine homes—as if to say to their old communities in the North and East, that they had achieved success in their frontier undertaking. In the period from 1854 to 1860, in cities such as New Orleans, Port Gibson, and Holly Springs, Old School Presbyterian churches were raised that were recognized as crown jewels of Southern architecture. Cumberland Presbyterians also erected a magnificent church in Oxford. These churches were, needless to say, built with the unrequited toil of African bondsmen, and their beauty is a tribute to these craftsmen whose names, in most instances, are lost to history.

The Rev. Zebulon Butler superintended the construction of the magnificent Port Gibson Church in 1860 but did not live to preach in it. He hoped the congregation would also construct a place of worship for its slave members. R/ Milton Winter photo

One of the best-known churches in the nation because of the great hand atop a tall spire above its lofty clock tower with the index finger pointing heavenward is the magnificent Port Gibson Presbyterian Church. Visible from miles around, the golden hand has long been a traveler's landmark. As the largest church in antebellum Claiborne County, the stucco-on-brick Romanesque Revival building, with Tuscan features, highly fashionable among Presbyterians of the era, seating approximately 350, included a large gallery for slaves. The cornerstone was laid on November 29, 1859. According to Elder H. N. Spencer, who had chaired the building committee, "Construction of the present sanctuary was begun in the latter part of the 1850s by a Yankee contractor. Fearful that war was imminent, the builder forfeited his contract when he had completed only the heavy walls up to the parapet." Using slaves skilled in the building arts from his country seat "*Altamont*," Spencer took over the completion of the church, which involved roofing the structure, building the steeple, and completing the interior

[51] James L. Murphy, *Salem Church, Lowndes County, Mississippi: A Lost Story of a Committed People* (Caledonia, Miss.: Buttahatchie Publications, 1996): 1-8; Thomas Cary Johnson, *A History of the Presbyterian Church, South, American Church History Series* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1894): 435-36; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:358-61.

finish.[52] The building was said to have cost $40,000. As such, it was one of the most impressive structures in the South. No church in Mississippi more fully embodied the immense wealth that the state's slaveholding upper classes had gained prior to the Civil War.[53] The church's pastor, the Rev. Zebulon Butler, did not live to see the new church completed, and a few weeks before his death, Butler addressed this letter to his congregation:

> Dear Brethren,
>
> In closing my ministry, extending through 33 years in Mississippi, it is my heart's desire to erect an African Presbyterian Church. I have bought a suitable site and engaged material, etc. I hope $1000 will pay for a convenient house of worship. I do hope you will treat with favor my last request. I am consciously losing my remnant of vitality. My Master warns me that my time is short. Truly, all of wealth and luxury come from the labor of these servants; and we should give back some for their comfort and especially for their religious comfort.
>
> Your servant for Christ's sake,
> Zebulon Butler.[54]

The African American church was never erected.

The Holly Springs Presbyterian Church, also built with slave labor, possesses among its records a list of the bondsmen who worked to build the church. Wages for their work were paid, the money going to their owners. The building was begun in 1860 but not completed until after the war. The large gallery, reached by a spiral staircase winding 36 steps up the church's tower, was intended for slave use, but because the building remained unfinished until 1869, it was never used for this purpose.[55]

Slave Religion

White Mississippi Presbyterians often gained wealth by appropriating income from the labor of others—slaves who were sometimes fellow Presbyterians. But many antebellum white Presbyterians in Mississippi did emphasize the paternalistic duties of masters toward their slaves, and arrangements were made for Presbyterian Negroes to hear the gospel, either at a separate service on Sunday afternoons, or by means of designated seating in the body of the church, or in a gallery.[56] Yet, as Jemar Tisby has observed, "White evangelists compromised the Bible's message of liberation to make Christianity compatible with slavery."[57] Historian of slavery John B. Boles remarks that such separate services were more typical of Episcopal and Presbyterian customs: "Methodist and Baptist preachers would usually, sometimes toward the end of the service, call for something like 'a special word for our Black brothers and sisters' and then turn to them in the back pews or in the balcony and address them with a didactic sermon that often stressed obedience to their earthly masters."[58] At Pine Ridge Church in

[52] *The* [Port Gibson] *Southern Reveille* (April 22, 1876).

[53] Helen Brownlee Baldwin, *et. al., A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Port Gibson, Mississippi, In Commemoration of its One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary, 1807-1957* (Port Gibson: published by the First Presbyterian Church, 1957): 12-13.

[54] Helen Brownlee Baldwin, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Port Gibson*,11-12.

[55] Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Rock*, 153. Free Black church members worshiped there until World War I.

[56] See Eugene Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Kenneth K. Bailey, "Protestantism and Afro-Americans in the Old South: Another Look," *Journal of Southern History* 41 (November 1975): 451-72. Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, revised ed, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 16.

[57] Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity with Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019): 66.

[58] John B. Boles, ed., *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988): 10.

1832, the session resolved that its minister should devote alternate Sunday evenings to religious instruction of the slaves "by preaching for their benefit in the church, in a style more simplified and more suited to their capacity." The session further agreed that those who gave evidence of piety should be organized into a branch of Pine Ridge Church and that the sacraments should be administered in the presence of the African congregation. In 1856, the Vicksburg Church authorized a separate service for its Black members, "on each Sabbath afternoon in the basement of the church."[59]

Two Mississippi Presbyterian churches, Pine Ridge and Carmel—going against the feeling of many in the early 19th century that for reasons of social control, Blacks should not be allowed to worship apart from their white masters—built separate buildings for African American communicants. George Washington Miller, who recalled his slave experiences for a WPA interviewer during the Great Depression, remembered life on a plantation in Panola County. "There was no plantation church, but about two miles off was a Presbyterian Church called Nazareth that all the communities went to. . . . There were pews for the white and for the Black, and often the leading negro deacon 'Uncle Dick' sat in the pulpit. Everybody liked him. I remember preacher [the Rev. Samuel Irwin] Reid, whom I thought almost was God himself."[60] Another early experiment in forming a distinct place of worship was carried out in the Carmel Church neighborhood, about 12 miles southeast of Natchez. Some years prior to the Civil War, a church called Forest was erected for the use of slaves, under the care and supervision of Carmel Church and its minister. The names of 157 slaves along with their owners appear in the Carmel-Forest registers. Among the ministers who served there were the Revs. J. H. Van Court, Benjamin Chase, and James Purviance.[61]

In many locales, the Black congregations were larger than the white. Where this was the case, slaves were given the main floor, while whites took the high seats. For example, when Bethel Presbyterian Church near Columbus erected a new house of worship in 1845, a gallery was erected that was used for Blacks at the morning service and for whites in the afternoon. A similar arrangement prevailed in Charleston, South Carolina, where Zion Presbyterian Church was built for the Rev. John L. Girardeau, a scholarly minister who devoted his life to work among the slaves. There he could preach to the large congregations who came to hear him. Girardeau, who was white and who had a great reputation as a preacher, drew large crowds of Black and white listeners. Since the church had been erected for the use of slaves, 1,000 Africans sat on the main floor, while whites who attended climbed stairs to a gallery.[62] Eliza Ripley gave this description of seating arrangements for slaves and strangers (that is, visitors) in Charleston's First Congregational Church—a plan that must have been familiar to Mississippians who visited the city and worshiped in this historic church.

> One entered a narrow vestibule, with two doors leading into the body of the church, and two flights of stairs to respective galleries. It was further furnished with two conspicuous tin signs—"Stranger's Gallery[63] on the Right," and "Gallery for colored Persons on the Left."[64]

Bethsalem Church in Winston County erected an annex to the back of its 1840s-era house of worship to accommodate enslaved worshipers. In churches lacking a gallery, or other provision for accommodation of

[59] Sessional records of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church (December 10 and 16, 1832); Mary Henderson Lambdin, *A Brief History of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church* (Natchez: McDonald Publishers, 1968): 8; Frank E. Everet Jr., *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Vicksburg, Mississippi in the Nineteenth Century* (Vicksburg: privately published, 1980): 50.

[60] Mississippi Slave Narratives from the WPA Records.

[61] C. W. Grafton, "History of Presbyterianism in Mississippi" (unpublished manuscript, 1927): 473-75.

[62] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:442; George A. Blackburn, *The Life and Work of John L. Girardeau* (Columbia: *The State*, 1916), 31-105; T. Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979): 140-58; Grafton, 562, 584; *Look to the Rock*, 111, 141; Elizabeth N. Graves, *et. al*., *Churches of St Andrew* (Oxford: St. Andrew Presbytery, 1989): 23.

[63] "Stranger" was a 19th century word for "visitor."

[64] Eliza Ripley, *Social Life in Old New Orleans* (New York: D. Appleton, 1912): 20.

bondsmen, Blacks sat in the rear pews on the main floor. Signs were erected designating an area "For Servants." This was the arrangement at the Sand Spring Church in Lafayette County.[65] In keeping with the egalitarian spirit that early prevailed in the revivalistic churches, Cumberland Presbyterians generally did not encourage separate services for Black members, preferring the older idea that all ought to worship together.[66]

Cumberland Presbyterian Perspectives on Slaveholding

A third Presbyterian denomination was to be found in the South, and although individual Cumberland Presbyterians expressed strong views for and against slavery, the Cumberland General Assembly, like other bodies such as the Episcopal Church's General Convention, avoided making any statement on the questions of slavery or secession. This avoidance of controversy has been attributed to the facts that the Church was evenly distributed among the Border States, and the intense focus of its ministers upon the work of redeeming individual souls. "Few were theologians and even fewer were social reformers with concern for the possible relationship between condition of soul and condition of body."

Attempts were made to turn the Cumberland Church against slavery. In 1847, the Synod of Pennsylvania resolved that the system of slavery was contrary to the principles of the gospel and "ought to be abolished," but the General Assembly, meeting the following year in Memphis, expressed regret at the Pennsylvania resolution, or "any attempt of judicatures of the church to agitate the exciting subject of slavery." The 1851 Cumberland Assembly adopted resolutions that, "The church of God . . . has no power to legislate upon subjects on which Christ and his apostles did not legislate," and stated further, that "The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was originally organized, and has ever since existed and prospered, under the conceded principle that Slavery was not, and should not, be regarded as a bar to communion. . . ." Though some of the lower church courts continued to raise the question, the Assembly's Committee on the State of Religion reported that, "Our communion . . . is thus far free from the sectional elements which are distracting and rending other religious bodies. . . ." B. W. McDonnold, a historian of the Cumberland Church, wrote that he never knew "an extreme pro-slavery man" who was a member of the Cumberland Church.

Southern Presbyterians Defended Slavery on Biblical Grounds

Randy J. Sparks has remarked that antebellum Southern society was based on inequality and domination, with slaves and free Blacks occupying the lowest places, and although many Presbyterians were critical, the institution's defenders quoted the Church's doctrinal standards in its defense. Methodists charged that Presbyterianism's harsh doctrine of predestination underlay the idea of a socially stratified society.[67]

Rhodes College historian of slavery Stephen R. Haynes has gathered evidence that certain Presbyterians in the Synod of Mississippi, such as James Smylie, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, and James A. Sloan invoked an interpretation of Noah's curse upon his son Ham, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, to justify the enslaving of Black persons—an idea which Palmer, as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans (this church was part of the Mississippi synod until 1901), spelled out in detail in an 1858 address at LaGrange Synodical College.

[65] Ludwig A. Beckman, *History of Bethsalem Presbyterian Church, Choctaw County, Mississippi, 1839-1926* (Weir, Miss.: *Winston County Journal*, 1926), unpaged. By the 20th century, galleries in Southern churches and theaters had become so much associated with segregated seating for Blacks that sarcastic persons called this portion of the church or theater "Negro heaven."

[66] B. W. McDonnold, *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (Nashville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888): 433-34.

[67] Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks,* 60; Randy J. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, Heritage of Mississippi Series, Volume II (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi for the Mississippi Historical Society, 2001): xi; see *Larger Catechism*, Questions 123-33. A full discussion of these matters is found in T. Erskine Clarke, *Our Southern Zion: A History of Calvinism in the South Carolina Low Country, 1690-1990* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996).

According to Palmer, "The descendants of Ham . . . in whom the sensual and corporeal appetites predominate, are driven like an infected race beyond the deserts of Sahara, where under a glowing sky nature harmonizes with their brutal and savage disposition." In a Confederate Fast Day sermon, June 1, 1861, Palmer preached that, "Upon Ham was pronounced the doom of perpetual servitude. . . . Accordingly, history records not a single example of any member of this group lifting itself, by any process of self-development, above the savage condition. From first to last, their mental and moral characteristics, together with the guidance of Providence, have marked them for servitude." Palmer later cited the Genesis 9-11 texts as a biblical justification for Southern secession. Most Presbyterian defenders of slavery painted a picture of benevolent masters served by childlike, obedient Africans.[68]

Property rolls, wills, comments of travelers, as well as the built environment indicate that many Mississippi Presbyterians stood near the top of a society that was highly stratified, socially, economically, racially, and religiously. There was a self-evident interest in keeping the "slave question" in the background, and in softening the terms by which it was represented. Despite these efforts, it sometimes boiled to the surface, often revealing an uneasy Presbyterian conscience. Out of this highly conflicted position arose a national antislavery movement—a movement that extended its influence into Mississippi, the heart of the plantation South. Although Gilbert Barnes has asserted that the national antislavery movement began among Presbyterians (the debate was religious before it became political), as might be expected, sectors of the Presbyterian Church—particularly in Mississippi—provided leadership for the slaveholders' cause. "No sect in the land has done more to perpetuate slavery," thundered abolitionist Stephen S. Foster of Presbyterians. He charged that Presbyterian clergy were "among the most active and energetic in arousing the people to determined and obstinate resistance."[69]

Examples of this "determined and obstinate resistance" abound. As Walter Brownlow Posey has written, "For at least a generation or more the great majority of clergymen in the South gave unwavering support to slavery and its right to expand into the territories. At the same time, they were convinced of the evils of abolition and of the right of the sovereign state." An examination of the major Protestant churches of the antebellum South will clearly reveal the adjustments and compromises made in polity, doctrine, and discipline as cotton and slavery fastened their hold on Southern society in whose defense the ministry led the way. Particular ministers identified by Posey include Benjamin M. Palmer, James H. Thornwell, and Thomas Smyth (Presbyterian), Stephen Elliott (Episcopal), and George F. Pierce (Methodist).[70]

The impassioned defense by Presbyterian preachers and intellectuals of ownership in human flesh, the Church's division along secular lines, and its conception of the Church's white leadership as God's elect, all served to undermine commitment to the national government and moved the South toward secession and war. It was a reflection of what the 20th century philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff observed that: "Interpretation of Scripture is always caught up within a broader interpretation of reality and experience and responsibility, in one way or another grounding that interpretation."[71] Thus, in December 1861, when Old School Southern Presbyterians formed a

[68] Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 12-13, 73-74; Benjamin M. Palmer, *Our Historic Mission, An Address Delivered Before the Eunomian and Phi-Mu Societies of LaGrange Synodical College, July 7, 1858* (New Orleans: *True Witness* Office, 1859); Benjamin M. Palmer, "National Responsibility Before God," a sermon preached in the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, June 13,1861, cited in David B. Chesebrough, ed., *"God Ordained This War:" Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991): 204.

[69] On the origins of the national anti-slavery movement see Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1933): 94.

[70] Irving Stoddard Kull, "Presbyterian Attitudes Toward Slavery," *Church History* 7 (June 1938): 101-14; Walter Brownlow Posey, "Review of *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* by James W. Silver (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Co., 1957)," in the *Journal of Mississippi History* 19 (July 1957): 208.

[71] E. H. Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,* 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1864): 2:526; Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830–1844* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933): 94; Stephen S. Foster, *The Brotherhood of Thieves, or, A True Picture of the American Church and Clergy* (New London, Conn.: W. Bolles, 1843): 45; William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935): 21-15; Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the

separate denomination, the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States adopted an "Address by the General Assembly to All the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth," in which it stated that slavery, "is a real and effective discipline, and without it, we are profoundly persuaded that the African race in the midst of us can never be elevated in the scale of being."

Forgetting that slaves in biblical times had come from many races, including the Caucasian peoples of the earth, the Confederate Assembly said further, "As long as that race, in its comparative degradation, coexists, side by side, with the white, bondage is its normal condition." Three years later, the Assembly declared that slavery was, "a providential trust, the divinely ordained means of engrafting the Black race into the Gospel, of elevating their position among the races of man . . . ."[72]

In making this declaration, the Southern Assembly echoed the view of Confederate vice-president Alexander Stephens' famous "Cornerstone Speech" of March 21, 1861, which argued against ideas of human equality, declaring that, "Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro [*sic*] is not equal to the white man, that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition." Stephens asserted that those who fought for the equality of Black and white were attempting, "to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal."[73]

During this period, Presbyterians, North and South, looked to Princeton for guidance, and Professor Charles Hodge, influential in the college and seminary, as well as other leading Old School ministers in the North, while not endorsing slaveholding as practiced in the South, refused to condemn it outright. Many felt Princeton was not strong enough in its statements on slavery. Indeed, as the Civil War drew near, Old School Presbyterians preserved their unity only by maintaining strict silence in their official councils upon the subject. Even as the South began developing its own seminaries, many Southerners still went to Princeton for their theological educations. Andrew E. Murray notes that until the sectional crisis deepened, there was a regular flow of ministers back and forth between North and South.[74]

Walter Brownlow Posey has noted that the growing controversy over slavery caused a diminishing of zeal among religious leaders in America for Church discipline. As the Church found itself increasingly unable to declare itself on the matter of slave ownership, it was less and less able to speak out about other matters, such as gambling, drunkenness, neglect of the Sabbath, and the like. In short, "the division over slavery . . . meant a dangerous lessening of the force of the church in great issues." The Rev. Robert Finley, president of Franklin College in Georgia, blamed money, cotton, and slavery for lack of religious zeal in the South.

"Slavery chills every ardor," he asserted.[75]

Presbyterians Early Opposed Slavery

Slavery, of course, was deeply ingrained in Southern culture. Little had been done by religious authorities for African people during the first two centuries after slavery's introduction to North America. Some Presbyterians

Confederate States of America (1864): 293; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Art of Remembering," *Journal of the Irish Christian Study Centre* 5 (1994): 2.

[72] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCCSA, 1861): 5-60; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCCSA, 1864): 293.

[73] Henry Cleveland, *Alexander H. Stephens, in Public and Private: With Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1866): 717-29; see Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[74] Hodge early held slaves himself, but he condemned their mistreatment and made a distinction between slavery in the abstract and what he saw as unjust Southern slave laws that deprived slaves of their right to education, marital and parental rights, and that "subject them to the insults and oppression of the whites. See David Torbett, *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2006): 230; Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 64.

[75] Walter Brownlow Posey, *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966): 326; Isaac V. Brown, *Memoirs of the Rev. Robert Finley, D.D.* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Terhune & Letson, 1819): 127-29.

owned slaves in the colonial period, and in that period, the Presbyterian Church strongly opposed slaveholding. Indeed, this opposition was more pronounced than in other communions. Again, to cite Posey:

> The background and early history of the Presbyterian Church stands in marked contrast with that of the Methodist and Baptist churches, both largely the products of America. A long period of existence and a Calvinistic theology gave to the Presbyterians a fixity of purpose and a surety of conviction about numerous matters—especially . . . slavery.[76]

H. Shelton Smith has pointed out that, in spite of all the talk of universal liberty, Presbyterians, like their Methodist and Baptist neighbors, waited until after the American Revolution to speak out against slavery. But in keeping with the sentiments of American leaders such as Patrick Henry, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, who expressed the hope that slavery could be gradually abolished, the Presbyterian synod (then the Church's highest governing body), in 1787, made the denomination's first official deliverance on slavery. This deliverance was in keeping with Presbyterianism's particular emphasis on education, recommending education as a means to the eventual abolition of slavery. The synod urged its members to "give those persons who are at present held in servitude such good education as to prepare them for the better enjoyment of freedom" and "use the most prudent measures . . . to procure eventually the final abolition of slavery in America." Following suit, presbyteries and synods in Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana began to take action on behalf of slaves, for as Molly Oshatz has written, "American Christians had awakened to the fact that the amelioration slavery's ills (as well as its abolition) brought the social nature of morality into sharp focus."[77]

Methodists and some Baptists, as well as Quakers, took similar positions in this period. Presbyterians were well qualified to influence opinion through their synod which, two years later, was transformed into a General Assembly. Except for Congress, it was the only large nationwide body to meet annually, and people of that era called the Presbyterian Church the country's most influential religious body. Also, as it happened, the denomination had comparatively few members in the Deep South during this period, as opposed to Episcopalians, who remained neutral.[78]

For its part, the General Assembly did not take an absolute position. It resisted efforts to exclude slave owners from the Church, reporting in 1815 that it was not strong enough as a body to take decisive action on the subject of slavery but declared the buying and selling of slaves "inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel." The Assembly expressed "deep regret, that the slavery of the Africans and of their descendants still continues in so many places, and even among those within the pale of the church." The 1816 Assembly backtracked, erasing some strong words it had adopted against manstealing in 1795. There was discussion at several Assemblies of sending missionaries to the South and West to work among the slaves, but no plan was developed. Instead, the Assembly urged the presbyteries under its care to adopt such measures "as will secure at least to the rising generation of slaves, within the bounds of the church, religious education; that they may be prepared for the exercise and enjoyment of liberty, when God, in his Providence, may open a door for their emancipation." At least one Mississippi Presbyterian, John W. Hundley, emancipated his slaves in 1829 and left money to a Presbyterian school in Jefferson County, with a request that the trustees admit Blacks.[79]

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[76] Posey, *Frontier Mission,* 337-38.

[77] H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But…Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972): 55-56; *Minutes of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1706-1788*, ed. by Guy S. Klett (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1976): 627; Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 213; Molly Oshatz, "'No Ordinary Sin:' Anti-Slavery Protestants and the Discovery of the Social Nature of Morality," *Church History* 79 (June 2010): 334-58; see Walter B. Posey, "The Presbyterian Church's Influence in the Lower Mississippi Valley," *Journal of Mississippi History* 17 (1955): 44.

[78] Alice Dana Adams, *The Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery in America, 1808-1831* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964): 98.

[79] Cited in *A Digest, Compiled from the Records of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: R. P. M'Culloh, 1820): 339; Sparks, *Religion in* Mississippi, 88.

Opinions Concerning Morality of Slavery Changed with Price of Cotton

Opinions concerning the morality of slave owning changed with the price of cotton. As historian of slavery David Reimers has put it,

> There was the kingdom of God and the kingdom of cotton. The fate of Black people hung in the balance as the first kingdom became increasingly subordinate to the second. In an event that pitted cotton against conscience, the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793 created enormous new commercial interest in the snowy fiber though, ironically, it brought Whitney little profit.[80]

In the year of the gin's invention, 500 pounds of cotton had been exported to Europe. By 1827, the figure was 127,000,000 pounds. Woodrow Wilson has written that, "Before this tremendous development of cotton culture had taken place, slavery had hardly had more than habit and the perils of emancipation to support it in the South. . . . After that, slavery seemed nothing less than the indispensable economic instrument of Southern society."[81]

"Cotton Too Valuable to Inspire Only Noble Behavior"

Cotton . . . is simply too valuable a crop to inspire only noble behavior, and too easily grown to invite self-restraint. . . . Once Whitney's gin facilitated mass production, an immensely profitable cash crop quickly attained so much persuasive control that it threw a bolt of energy into the dying institution of slavery, which in turn triggered the escalating political, moral, religious, and economic discord that led to bloodshed. There were no circuit breakers. There were no acceptable alternatives for men and women whose capacity for rational thought in the North and South was ensnared by the wispy fibers of this puffy plant. . . . There was simply too much money to be made. In the end cousins were killing one another in remote Pennsylvania farmlands and on the bluffs along the Mississippi Delta.

—Stephen Yafa, *Big Cotton: How a Humble Fiber Created Fortunes, Wrecked Civilizations, and Put America on the Map*

Salem Church was an Anti-Slavery Congregation

A lone ecclesiastical outpost of anti-slavery sentiment persevered in Mississippi—Salem Church in Lowndes County founded by followers of an anti-slavery South Carolina Presbyterian minister, the Rev. William C. Davis. In the early years, Salem Church was aligned with the Independent Presbyterians, a small anti-slavery denomination in the Palmetto State. Organized in 1832 by William D. Feemster, the small Mississippi congregation initially included a few slave owners, but on June 4, 1842, Feemster laid the following question before the church, of which his son, S. J. Feemster, was then pastor:

> Is it consistent with the rules laid down by Christ in His word for the government of the conduct of His followers to . . . buy or sell his fellow creatures, as property for the sake of gain?

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[80] David M. Reimers, *White Protestantism and the Negro* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965): 3-24; see Stephen Yafa, *Big Cotton: How a Humble Fiber Created Fortunes, Wrecked Civilizations, and Put America on the Map* (New York: Viking, 2005): 80-86; John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

[81] Woodrow Wilson, *Division and Reunion* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1893): 125.

Promulgation of such questions caused dissension in the congregation, as well as in the wider community, which took anxious notice of the doings of this unusual religious body located in a major cotton-growing area. A manuscript by the Rev. Samuel Calvin Feemster (son of S. J. Feemster) later recalled the event:

> The vote on the resolution was held July 2, 1842. One voted 'aye,' seven 'no,' and nine refused to vote. Fear probably influenced the silence of some. The church still retained slave holding members not supporting [that] their crime called for church censure. This they made clearly understood. But a fearful howl was raised against "Abolition Feemster" and as his church and was located over 14 miles northeast of Columbus, it was said that there was danger of a mob from that town to drive away both pastor and people. It was finally admitted, however, that "a church had a right to give its opinion" as to the right or wrong of slavery. Slave holders began to drop off, however, and no more of them would join so we were eventually relieved of all such members. (True, one very poor woman joined that had one in her possession but if I recollect rightly, could not dispose of or sell.)

Calvin Feemster also indicated in his manuscript that few slaves were allowed by their masters to hear Feemster preach.

Another description of events was given by a female member of the Feemster family:

> One time when he [S. J. Feemster] announced the subject of his sermon for the following Sunday, word reached Columbus. The most influential men drove out in their most expensive carriages and boldly walked up to the front seats. If they thought to bluff him out, they did not know their man. The challenge put him at his best. The congregation watched with secret amusement as the men, one by one, bowed their heads and quietly slipped outside. The two who stuck it out showed plainly that they wished they were elsewhere.[82]

Meanwhile, the profitability of cotton made it possible for penniless immigrants to become landowners and for native farmers to become planters. As Stephen Yafa has said, "People's minds became enslaved by cotton." There is no doubt that the wealth cotton growing afforded and the presence of slave labor made it possible for the relatively small white middle and upper classes to enhance their positions and stature in the community, what with the ability to build substantial homes, entertain guests, and cultivate a reputation for respectability, religiosity, and generosity. Cotton created a sort of new aristocracy. It not only made planters wealthy, but it also made many of them famous, causing them to be revered in their neighborhoods. Such people often attained stature in their churches. Many Presbyterian elders were cotton planters.[83]

Walter Posey has observed that "Cotton and slavery not only brought a halt to the spread of frontier democracy," but fired resistance against abolitionist claims. "Southerners in the cotton sections of the country had become terrified by the force of abolitionism, and this fear led to the surrender of important principles held by most of the churches." The older egalitarian spirit in the churches died away. Frontier society after the growth of cotton planting became much more stratified, with many white Presbyterians near the top. The Church became timid in its criticism of slavery. Indeed, arguments *on behalf of* slaveholding began to be advanced by both Northern and Southern writers. Many of these were Presbyterians. Slaveholding found new justification, and by 1835, the Synod of Mississippi denied the right of the Church to interfere in any of the political or civil relations of society, confining Church authority "to the realm of conscience." Two years later, South Alabama Presbytery agreed with the Synod of Mississippi and instructed its commissioners to the General Assembly to deny the right of the Assembly to

[82] Mary Elisabeth Feemster, *That Moving Clan* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, reprinted 1960).

[83] Yafa, *Big Cotton*, 149; see Ulrich B. Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1929).

interfere with slavery. Such ideas formed an early expression of the distinctive white Southern Presbyterian doctrine of the "Spirituality of the Church," which forbade any involvement by the Church in "political matters."[84]

"You dare not make war upon cotton!" cried South Carolina Senator James H. Hammond in 1858. "No power on earth dares make war upon it. Cotton is king!" Cotton became dominant in Mississippi after Rush Nutt, a Presbyterian planter at Rodney, developed a cottonseed strain that would thrive in the area's humid climate. Slave labor was essential to the production of this cotton, so that the state's citizens found themselves increasingly pressed to defend the arrangements in human flesh by which their livelihoods were sustained. By 1833, four Deep South states—Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana, produced more cotton than the remainder of the country.[85]

Mississippi Presbyterian ministers revised their sermons, and some began to justify slavery. As Randy J. Sparks has observed, the very ministers who once condemned slavery now "sought to perfect the institution . . . not to abolish it." Churches developed a biblical defense of slavery and a closely related mission movement to slaves, a movement that, while concerned for the salvation of slave souls, also preached much about sins of the flesh—quarreling, drinking, stealing, and sexual immorality. Missionaries to slaves stressed themes, such as obedience to masters and labor without complaint, "as unto the Lord." The missionaries expressed pity for the conditions under which the African slaves lived, but, lest they lose the privilege of addressing the Africans, they did not criticize a master's right to own slaves.[86]

Sparks goes on to say, that "It is impossible to separate the evangelical movement in early Mississippi from the plantation revolution under way at the same time." On a national level, discussions of slavery in the Presbyterian General Assembly became increasingly divisive. The 1818 Assembly had taken place as the national debate leading to the Missouri Compromise was becoming more and more shrill. Early in the meeting, pro-slavery commissioners accomplished the expulsion of the Rev. George Bourne of Virginia, an indefatigable antislavery campaigner. Bourne had been deposed by his presbytery and had appealed to the General Assembly. Then, after many of the commissioners had left, an anti-slavery contingent found itself in control, and unanimously adopted the most rigorous General Assembly legislation against slave ownership ever approved up to that time—a resolution that declared human bondage "a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature," and "totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ." It exhorted Presbyterians "to increase their exertions to effect a total abolition of slavery," and expressed sympathy with those in slave states who were doing all they legally could for their bondsmen, discountenancing all cruelty, and recommending education of slaves, as well as the American Colonization Society's, efforts to resettle freed slaves in Africa. The resolution also called for the suspension of any church member who sold a Christian slave. After this, proslavery commissioners made sure that the Assembly issued no more deliverances on the subject of slavery for 18 years.[87]

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[84] Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 339, 342; Kull, "Presbyterian Attitudes Toward Slavery," 101-14; Larry Edward Tise, "The Interregional Appeal of Proslavery Thought: An Ideological Profile of the Antebellum American Clergy," *Plantation Society* 1 (February 1979): 58-72; Kenneth Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); *Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest*, 82; see Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988); Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholder's World View* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004).

[85] David L. Cohn, *Where I was Born and Raised* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948): 41.

[86] Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterian Missions in the Southern United States* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1934): 178-88; Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks,* 3; Haven P. Perkins, "Religion for Slaves: Difficulties and Methods," *Church History* 10 (1941): 236.

[87] Henry K. Rowe, *The History of Religion in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1928): 99-100; William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950): 292-93.

"Resolved: That Further Discussion of Slavery Be Indefinitely Postponed"

By the early 1820s, resolutions had been introduced in the Assembly to exclude slaveholders from the ministry and to deny communion to slave traders. Both failed. Presbyterians had made their compromise with mammon, and by 1833, the Synod of West Tennessee resolved that further discussion of slavery should be "indefinitely postponed." Penrose St. Amant has remarked, "There was a growing tendency in the Presbyterian Church in . . . Mississippi to turn its attention away from the basic moral issue posed by slavery, to the religious instruction of the slaves. . . . In other words, the church, holding that slavery itself was sanctioned by Scripture, devoted its energies to an attempt to bring about a more 'Christian' operation of the institution." The extant records of the Mississippi presbyteries contain many exhortations toward further effort toward "the religious instruction of the colored people," but no records of debate as to the morality of slaveholding. Thus, although Presbyterians perhaps ameliorated the effects of slavery in some sections of Mississippi, the situation was, as Shelton Smith has remarked, that "Antislavery in the South was . . . a lost cause long before the rise of radical abolitionism above the Potomac."[88]

By Posey's account, "Southerners in the cotton sections of the country were terrified by the force of abolitionism." Slaveholders charged that revivalists in other parts of the country spawned a host of evils: sects, utopian communities, and abolitionism.[89] Southerners who defended slavery took refuge in the U. S. Constitution, noting that it permitted and regulated slaveholding, painting abolitionists as opponents of the Constitution. Defenders of slavery claimed the Bible for their side, alleging that abolitionists adhered to a "higher law" than scripture, which declared, "Servants, obey your masters." Applying the religious skepticism of William Lloyd Garrison, who said, "To discard a portion of scripture is not necessarily to reject the truth but may be the highest evidence that one can give of his love of the truth" to all critics of slavery, it was not long before "abolitionism" equaled "atheism" in the Southern slaveowner's mind, as well as the minds of many conservative Old School Presbyterians in the North.[90]

[88] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 30; Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1789-1820): 692-93; Minutes of the Synod of West Tennessee (October 18, 1833); Penrose St. Amant, *A History of the Presbyterian Church in Louisiana* (Richmond, Va.: Printed by Whittet & Shepperson for the Board of Trustees for Presbyterian Publications, Synod of *Louisiana*, 1961): 75-76; Smith, *In His Image...But*, 73.

[89] Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 342; Thomas V. Peterson, *Ham and Japheth in America: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South* (Metuchen, N.J.: American Theological Library Association, 1978): 15.

[90] The Rev. Joseph R. Wilson, father of U. S. president Woodrow Wilson, preached January 6, 1861, in the First Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia, on the "Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible." He sought to "show how completely the Bible brings human slavery underneath the sanction of divine authority." One of his principal arguments was that scripture failed to denounce slavery, and that humans could not forbid what God did not—for "the Bible could not wink at prevailing error, much less at prevailing crime, least of all at prevailing ungodliness, through any fear of arousing angry opposition against Christianity on the part of such as might hold the civil power, of such as might direct the sneer of hatred." Wilson argued that slavery existed throughout the Roman Empire and was often referred to in the New Testament and was never condemned. He urged his mostly white congregation to be good masters. Cited in A. Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2013): 32-33; see also Erskine Clarke, "Southern Nationalism at Columbia Theological Seminary," *Journal of Presbyterian H*istory 66 (Summer 1988): 123-33.

Presbyterians and the Expanding "Slaveocracy"

As cotton and slavery took a firmer hold on the Southern economy in the 1830s and '40s, Presbyterian orthodoxy became an important factor in establishing a 'social oligarchy' whose convictions on the justice of the adopted position seldom wavered. Presbyterian ministers, recognizing in Calvinistic theology the rational premise of master and slave, were among the ablest defenders of the moral and scriptural basis for slavery. In accord with expediency, the [Old School] Presbyterian Church, 'the most influential religious body in the United States,' took its stand with an expanding slaveocracy. Expediency produced compromise; compromise gave energy and stimulation to an institution, which, without the direct and indirect support of the churches in the early South and Southwest, might have been short-lived.

—Walter Brownlow Posey,
Journal of Presbyterian History, 1949

New School Presbyterians in Ohio and other Northern states were among the most strident opponents of slavery; and from Tennessee to the Gulf of Mexico, sessions, presbyteries, and synods of Southern Presbyterianism (Old and New School alike) united against these "Northern disturbers." There are few records as to what enslaved Presbyterians thought of sermons delivered by their white pastors against atheism and its malevolent offspring, abolitionism.[91]

Many Southern clergy and laypeople were willing to sacrifice their participation in national religious organizations when it became clear that they would have to choose between loyalties to the larger Church or to the institution that gave them their livelihood. Still, one group of Southern Presbyterians remained unconvinced: As Randy J. Sparks has written, "Enslaved Christians held fast to their belief that slavery violated the laws of God." Moreover, as Molly Oshatz has shown, the use of scripture to defend slavery spurred many in America to value secular ethical principles over rigid adherence to the Bible.[92]

Scholars have cited the change of Presbyterian opinion about slavery as one of the most rapid and amazing theological shifts in the history of American Christianity and as a telling commentary on the power of economics to drive religious thought. Leonard Woolsey Bacon has written that it would be difficult to find a similar example of "so sudden and sweeping a change of sentiment of a leading doctrine of moral theology." He dates the "Southern apostasy" on slavery to about 1833. As noted, foremost in the effort to turn opinions was the Rev. James Smylie, of Amite County, Mississippi. Smylie, who owned a plantation called Myrtle Heath, has been called by Randy J. Sparks "one of the most influential ministers in the Southwest." Smylie, the second Presbyterian minister to settle in Mississippi, came as a missionary from the Synod of North Carolina in 1805 and organized churches in the Natchez District.[93] In 1811, Smylie moved south to Amite County, where he organized churches called Bethany and

[91] *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told By His Children* (New York: Century, 1889): 146-47. The Rev. Henry Van Dyke, an Old School Presbyterian in Brooklyn, N.Y., preached that "Abolition leads, in multitudes of cases, and by logical process, to utter infidelity….One of its avowed principles is, that it does not try slavery by the Bible; but… it tries the Bible by the principles of freedom." "The Character and Influence of Abolition," in *Fast Day Sermons*, 163-64; Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 342; see Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Religious Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

[92] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 123; see Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Molly Oshatz, "The Problem of Moral Progress: The Slavery Disputes and the Development of Liberal Protestantism in the United States," *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008): 225-50.

[93] J. R. Hutchinson, *Reminiscences, Sketches and Addresses Selected from My Papers During a Ministry of Forty-Five Years in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas* (Houston: E. H. Cushing, 1874): 226; Jones, *Protestantism*, 234. See Henry W. McLaughlin, "The Oldest Living Church in the Southwest," *Presbyterian Survey* (October 1931): 639; Roger Heidelberg,

Amite. Smylie spent the rest of his ministry in this area.[94] His place of residence, Amite County, was a thriving slaveocracy. In 1840, its population consisted of 3,741 whites, 5,741 slaves, and 29 free Blacks. More than half of the county's whites owned slaves, usually between 6 and 30. Smylie was himself a large slaveholder, having come into possession of 53 bondspeople through auspicious marriages. In 1836, Smylie published a highly controversial apologetic on behalf of slavery,[95] becoming the first Mississippian to defend slavery on biblical grounds.

In the late 1820s, Smylie composed a sermon defending slavery that he chose to deliver, not in one of the rural churches he pastored, but in the larger First Presbyterian Church of Port Gibson. By his account, his aggressive views at first offended even wealthy planters in the Port Gibson Church, but Smylie's ideas soon came to define the attitude of most white Presbyterians in Mississippi. Thus, when the Presbytery of Chillicothe in Ohio, a center for abolitionist advocacy, sent an anti-slavery petition to the Presbytery of Mississippi, slave-owning Mississippians took offense and rallied to a defense of their interests.[96]

The Chillicothe letter stated that, "Had the church kept her hands clear of this bloody crime, it is possible, nay it is almost certain that slavery in these United States would have long ago been abolished." Smylie penned a response to Chillicothe Presbytery based on his sermon. At first, Mississippi Presbytery was disturbed by his ideas and refused to endorse it, but despite warnings from colleagues, Smylie published his response as a pamphlet, and since no publisher would accept it, he had it printed privately.[97] Smylie's *Review of a Letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe, to the Presbytery of Mississippi on the Subject of Slavery* received wide circulation, and eventually carried the day among those who defended ownership of property in human flesh.[98] As one of the largest landowners in Amite County, Smylie's answer to Chillicothe Presbytery, "although covered with odium for awhile," soon became, as Bacon remarks, "not only prevalent, but violently and exclusively dominant" in most of the lower South. Sparks wryly observed that, it was, perhaps, no coincidence that the defense of slavery "began with a wealthy slaveholder who ministered to [his] county's most affluent denomination." Lewis G. Vander Velde has written that Smylie was likely the first Southern thinker to advance the thesis that slavery was a positive good, sanctioned by scripture and part of the divinely ordained social order.[99]

"Smylie's Pamphlet," as his publication quickly came to be called, forms a clear example of a type of theological reasoning that asserts that arguments based on the spirit or tenor of the Bible are invalid if specific texts can be adduced that counter arguments from the overall sense. Smylie adduced texts that to him proved that slavery could be justified under the divine dispensation as a *positive good*, and that the duties of masters and servants were clearly stated in the New Testament. Against those who contended that it was a sin to own a slave, he demanded to know by what text of scripture this contention could be justified. To hold any other view, he claimed, must "discredit God's revelation, destroy private property, and sow the seeds of communism." A devout believer in the paternalistic teachings he espoused, Smylie devoted his last years to ministry among slaves connected with

"Pine Ridge: The Church that Wouldn't Say 'Die,'" *Presbyterian Survey* (April 1954): 23-24; "History of Presbyterianism in Mississippi," 423-32; Mary Henderson Lambdin, *A Brief History of the Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church* (Natchez: privately published, 1957); *Shrines to Tomorrow*, [67]. A photograph of the original brick church appears in Richard J. Cawthon, *Lost Churches of Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010): 148.

[94] Jones, *Protestantism*, 234-35.

[95] See Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *A History of American Christianity* (New York: Scribner's, 1897): 27-78; Dale Edwyna Smith, *The Slaves of Liberty: Freedom in Amite County, Mississippi, 1820-1868* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1999).

[96] Opposition to slavery was so strong in Chillicothe Presbytery that it almost withdrew from the General Assembly in protest against its 1845 action on slavery. A small group of protesting congregations, centered in Ohio, called the Free Presbyterian Church, did withdraw. After the Civil War began, these reunited with the Old School Assembly. See *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 92-93.

[97] Sparks, "Mississippi's Apostle," 98.

[98] James Smylie, *Review of a Letter, from the Presbytery of Chillicothe to the Presbytery of Mississippi, on the Subject of Slavery* (Woodville, Miss.: Norris, 1836); *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 92-93.

[99] Bacon, 277-78; Jones, *Protestantism*, 240-42; cf. Randy J. Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 1800-1861," in Boles, *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*, 119-120; Vander Velde, *The Presbyterian Churches and the Federal Union, 1861-1869* 27-28.

two congregations near his home. In memorials adopted at his death in 1853, the Synod of Mississippi credited Smylie "for giving the true exposition of the doctrines of the Bible in relation to slavery in the commencement of the abolition excitement."[100]

Dale Edwyna Smith has made a careful study of the session books of Smylie's Bethany and Unity churches and asserts that prior to Smylie's famous pamphlet defending slavery directed to Ohio's Chillicothe Presbytery, the elders meted out discipline to white and Black alike on more or less identical terms, but that afterward, the session functioned principally as a body to discipline the Black slaves of white members. Slaves were, of course, enjoined to obedience and subjected to punishment for failure to obey, but Smylie also held owners responsible, at the peril of their souls, for the proper shepherding of slaves. In 1848-1850 and 1851, Smylie was listed in the ministerial record of the General Assembly as a missionary to the slaves, and his churches aggressively enrolled slave members. Smylie died in 1853, after which the records of Bethany Church indicate a resumption of concern for the discipline of white as well as African American members.[101]

An argument similar to the one in which Smylie engaged ensued in the northern part of the state in 1839 when a communication was received in Tombeckbee Presbytery from the Congregationalist General Conference of Maine. A committee of presbytery prepared a response, which was forwarded to Maine, carrying a request "to publish the reply of this Presbytery entire, with the addition of the scriptures referred to." Although the topic of the exchange was not specified, it is likely that the communications between the presbytery and the Congregationalist Conference of Maine had to do with slavery.[102]

Such missives from others were regarded as inappropriate meddling by the courts of the Old School Presbyterian Church, as indicated by a General Assembly resolution adopted in 1850 in reference to a letter condemning slavery sent from the Congregationalist General Association of Massachusetts. The Assembly's resolution declared,

> That our delegate to the next General Association of Massachusetts be directed to inform that venerable body, that this General Assembly must consider itself the best judge of the action which it is necessary for it to take as to all subjects within its jurisdiction; and that any interference on the part of that General Association with its action upon any subject upon which this General Assembly has taken order, is offensive, and must lead to an interruption of the correspondence which subsists between that Association and this General Assembly.

More proslavery writers came from the Presbyterian Church than any other. As Sparks has observed, "No doubt the high educational requirement for Presbyterian ministers helps explain their preponderance, as does their theology, since Calvinism was free of the Arminian doctrine of free salvation equally available to all." Other Mississippi Presbyterians authored pro-slavery tracts, including the Rev. Alexander Newton, a New School Presbyterian, the Rev. J. William Flinn, a son of the Philadelphia (Red Banks) Church, and the Rev. James A. Sloan, an early Associate Reformed Presbyterian leader in the state and later a member of Chickasaw Presbytery, who published a book called *The Great Question Answered; or, Is Slavery a Sin in Itself . . . Answered According to the Teaching of the Scriptures* (1857).[103]

Harriet Martineau, an English traveler to America, and one of the most vocal critics of human slavery, charged, that "From the lips and pens of Presbyterians in the South, come some of the defenses of slavery which evince the deepest depravity of principle and feeling. . . . Of the Presbyterian, as well as other clergy of the South, some are even planters, superintending the toils of their slaves, and making purchases, or effecting sales in the

[100] Jones, *Protestantism*, 240-42; Jack P. Maddex Jr., "The Southern Apostasy Revisited: The Significance of Proslavery Christianity," *Marxist Perspectives* 2 (Fall 1979): 132-41; Bacon, 277-78.

[101] Dale Edwyna Smith, *The Slaves of Liberty: Freedom in Amite County,* Mississippi, xvi, 672, 74, 93, 9-95, 96-98.

[102] Minutes of Tombeckbee Presbytery (April 9, 1839).

[103] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 120; James A. Sloan, *The Great Question Answered; or, Is Slavery a Sin in Itself . . . Answered According to the Teaching of the* Scriptures (Memphis: Hutton, Galloway, 1857).

slave-markets during the week, and preaching on Sundays whatever they can devise that is least contradictory to their daily practice."[104]

Failed Attempts at Compromise

Presbyterians, like Methodists and Baptists, largely retreated from their earlier calls to end slavery and either became silent or neutral on the matter, declining to take a position on what they now judged to be purely "a civil matter." From 1836 onward, the Old School Assembly would only take notice of the need to care for the spiritual wellbeing and kind treatment of slaves.

In 1836, this position was upheld in the General Assembly, after which, the Presbytery of West Tennessee sought to put the acrimonious debate over slavery to rest with this action:

> Resolved, that the whole matter be indefinitely postponed on the ground that no church judicatory has any right to make laws binding the conscience.

The next year, this position was again upheld as the General Assembly divided into Old and New Schools, with slavery and sectionalism coloring the divide. James Smylie of Mississippi Presbytery, fresh from the publication of his *Review of a Letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe* the previous year, was present and participating. The 19th century Southern Presbyterian apologist Thomas Cary Johnson of Virginia's Union Theological Seminary remarked in 1897 that the Old School was victor, "only by virtue of an almost 'solid South.'" The Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama, in a pastoral letter written by Smylie, offered that "The Synod has good reasons for believing than an overwhelming majority of the seceding body [that is, the New School], and of those in the North who adhere to it, are hostile to one at least of the domestic institutions of the South."

This change in Southern moral theology, particularly among the revivalistic churches, almost guaranteed schisms among the churches and conflict between the sections. As proslavery quickly became the new orthodoxy, Mississippi Presbyterians who could not agree faced an increasingly perilous course. The Rev. George Potts, a pastor of the Natchez Church, had earlier supported the colonization movement as a way of easing the evils of slavery, but gave up and moved to New York in 1835. By contrast, in 1838, *The Liberty County Advocate* was urging readers to shun neighbors who believed slavery to be morally wrong. "Such should not be tolerated," the editor warned. "If they were," the South might as well "lower our colours and capitulate to the Abolitionists at once."[105]

Perhaps because of the slavery controversy, membership in the Old School Presbyterian denomination began to decline. Between 1833 and 1837, the church lost about 13,000 members, and divisions among the remaining adherents became apparent. Smylie claimed that three-fourths of white Presbyterians in the South owned slaves. How accurate his estimate was cannot be established, but with three-fourths of the Presbyterians in the South adhering to the Old School, the slavery issue was downplayed in that communion until the Church divided again on the eve of the Civil War. (The Church's New School wing also divided along sectional lines in 1858.) Slaveholding Mississippians were members of both denominations, and certainly the abolitionist proclivities of the New School General Assembly must have been provocative to its Southern slaveholding members.[106]

During the 1840s and '50s, Southern Presbyterian ministers continued as ardent defenders of slaveholding. As in the preceding decade, Presbyterians provided the largest number of ministers who wrote in defense of slavery.

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[104] Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 3 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), 3:230-31.

[105] *Liberty Advocate* (March 31, 1838), cited in Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi," 134.

[106] The Rev. Frederick A. Ross, a New School Presbyterian from Huntsville, Alabama also published an apology for slave ownership, said to be among the most radical books published on the subject. See Frederick A. Ross, *Slavery Ordained of God* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1859).

Among these were theologian James Henley Thornwell of Columbia Seminary and the Rev. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, a member of the Synod of Mississippi and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans.[107]

Thornwell, who is regarded as one of the finest intellects in the 19th century South, worked slaves at his plantation, Dryburgh Abbey, near Lancaster, South Carolina. He was said to be a kind master, careful to provide religious instruction, and although he claimed that he made virtually no profit from the slaves, his ownership of a plantation did obtain for him the prestige and advantage of a planter in South Carolina society. In the General Assemblies of the Old School Church, Thornwell maintained that slavery was a civil relation sanctioned by scripture, with which the Church had no right to interfere. He said that "slavery is a part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world and stands in the same general relation to Christianity as poverty, sickness, disease, or death." He said slavery was the "good and merciful" way of organizing "labor which Providence had given us" so that, "we cherish the institution not from avarice, but from principle." Yet, even so great a defender of slavery as Thornwell had moments when he thought it should be abolished.[108]

Southern Presbyterian thought soon moved beyond the defense of slave ownership to a belief that slavery represented a divine institution and a "providential trust." The most eloquent Presbyterian defender of slavery was Benjamin Morgan Palmer. Palmer reasoned that slavery was a product of the imperfect state of human society in which, "it pleases God to allow evils which check evils that are greater." In his 1858 address delivered at the LaGrange Synodical College, Palmer had asserted that the historic mission of Southern whites consisted of a "providential trust . . . to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of slavery as now existing . . . a trust to . . . transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right, unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it." This language would find its way into the declarations of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States,[109] not to mention the secular controversies arising from the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

A powerful orator, whose best-known statement approving slavery was a Thanksgiving Day sermon in 1860, Palmer asserted that the great duty of Southerners was to serve as, "constituted guardians of the slaves themselves." In order to save the Black race from "a doom worse than death," he argued that the relation of slavery had to be preserved. It was a duty the Church owed to the civilized world. As moderator of the constituting Assembly of

[107] Eugene D. Genovese, *"Slavery Ordained of God:" The Southern Slaveholders' View of Biblical History and Modern Politics* (Gettysburg, Pa.: Gettysburg College, 1985); Mitchell Snay, "American Thought and Southern Distinctiveness: The Southern Clergy and the Sanctification of Slavery," *Civil War History* 35 (December 1989): 311-28; Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); Tise, "The Interregional Appeal of Proslavery Thought," 69. Not all Southerners and not all Southern ministers followed such thinkers as Thomas Cooper of South Carolina, Thomas Dew and George Fitzhugh of Virginia, and Josiah Nott of Alabama in their arguments that slavery was not merely a *necessary evil*, but a *positive good*. Indeed, clerical defenders of the idea, such as Thornwell and Palmer, while eloquent and well-known, were relatively few, and even the most vigorous proponents of slaveholding in the clergy, such as the Virginia Presbyterian, Robert L. Dabney, of Union Theological Seminary, defended the Bible's teaching that the human race was one against Nott's assertion that Blacks constituted a separate and inferior species. See William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitude toward Race in America, 1815-1869* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Charles Grier Sellers Jr., "The Travail of Slavery," Charles G. Sellers Jr., ed., *The Southerner as American* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960): 40-71.

[108] Henry Alexander White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders* (New York: Neale, 1911): 303; Clement Eaton, *The Civilization of the Old South* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968): 188; Ralph E. Morrow, "The Proslavery Argument Revisited," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (1961): 79-94; James Henley Thornwell, "Our National Sins," in *Fast Day Sermons, or the Pulpit on the State of the Country* (Rudd and Carleton, 1861): 48, 44; William W. Freehling, "James [Henley] Thornwell's Mysterious Antislavery Moment," *Journal of Southern History* 57 (August 1991): 383-406; see John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

[109] Benjamin M. Palmer, *Our Historic Mission*.

the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States in 1861, Palmer's arguments cemented the Southern Church's pro-slavery position.[110]

Later New School Debates Over Slavery Lead to Division

The Old School position was not the only Presbyterian position on slavery. Whereas the Old School Assembly had resolved in 1836 that all discussion of slaveholding be "indefinitely postponed," the matter came up repeatedly in the New School Assembly. Southern Presbyterians who adhered to the New School were a decided minority and found themselves under ever increasing pressure. The New School churches in Mississippi did not have a synod until 1845. The faction of the Presbytery of Clinton that aligned with the New School Church had 244 members in 1843. Two years later, the presbytery reorganized itself into a Synod of Mississippi (New School) and created two more presbyteries—an action that caused outcry in the New School Assembly when it met in 1846, for the recognized procedure was for the Assembly to create synods and for synods to erect presbyteries. However, commissioners from the three New School presbyteries then existing in Mississippi were seated, giving the Mississippians six votes instead of two. This added to a pro-slavery bloc. A protest against the Assembly's action was lodged by some who interpreted its action as, "encouraging disorder in the Church." The slave question was also mentioned, saying, "We solemnly protest against the reception of these presbyteries on the ground, that ministers and church-members connected with said presbyteries are slaveholders, and their commissioners claim and advocate, that the Bible sanctions the institution of slavery, thus increasing and strengthening the slave-holding influence in the Church." In 1849, the Assembly declared that the Church had the duty "to efface this blot on our holy religion."[111]

At the New School Assembly of 1850, five overtures condemning slavery were received from its Northern constituency. The Assembly declared, "That we exceedingly deplore the working of a whole system of Slavery as it exists in our country . . . as fraught with many and great evils to the civil, political and moral interests of those regions where it exists," and "That the holding of our fellow-men in the condition of slavery, except in those cases where it is unavoidable . . . is an offence in the proper import of that term, as used in the Book of Discipline . . . and should be regarded and treated in the same manner as other offences."

The Assembly referred enforcement responsibility to sessions and presbyteries, "to take such action thereon as in their judgment the laws of Christianity require." This caused much consternation among slave-owning New School Presbyterians in the South, for it was the first time a Presbyterian Church had declared ownership in human property to be a cause for church discipline. The debate consumed five of the 12 days of the Assembly.[112]

Among the pressures on the New School Assembly was the resolve of the American Home Mission Society to require its missionaries to renounce slavery. In 1853, the New School Assembly took further action to call Southern slavery practices into question. Presbyteries were ordered to report on progress made to eliminate the evil of slavery. The Presbytery of Newton in Mississippi served notice that the Assembly's action was "uncalled for" and demanded "a cessation of all agitation in the General Assembly upon the subject of slavery." The Presbytery of Lexington-South, also in Mississippi, declared that it was of "vital interest to the peace and prosperity of our church, to cease agitating this question in its highest judicatory."[113]

The 1855 Assembly authorized a pastoral letter to reaffirm the testimony of past Assemblies regarding

[110] The best review of the Southern defense of slavery is Jenkins, *Pro–Slavery Thought in the Old South*; see also Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, Library of Southern Civilization (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906): 210-11, 220; Robert Ellis Thompson, *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States*, Vol. VI of The American Church History Series, 3rd ed. (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1895): 156; White, 367-68; W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Random House, 1969): 83.

[111] Harold M. Parker Jr., *The United Synod of the South: The Southern New School Presbyterian Church* (New York: Greenwood, 1986): 61.

[112] Parker, *The United Synod of the South*, 121-22.

[113] Parker, *The United Synod of the South*, 123-26.

slavery's sinfulness and the Church's resolve that "this evil be removed from our Church as soon as it can be done in a Christian and constitutional manner." It appointed a committee to consider what judicial options the Church might exercise. Southerners argued that the Church had no power to enforce these measures. It was decided that while the Assembly could not itself commence a process of discipline against a slaveholder, it could, in the process of reviewing the records of its synods, call them to account for failure to require presbyteries and sessions to do so. For all this, historian of slavery Andrew E. Murray has noted that, "The total Presbyterian contribution to abolitionism was modest and should not be exaggerated."[114]

Having made slaveholding a bar to church membership, it was inevitable that the New School Church would divide. Talk of Southern secession from the Church was not new. As early as 1855, a New School Mississippian had written that an increasing number of ministers in his synod were in favor of withdrawing. The 1856 Mississippi synod directed its clerk to correspond with other Southern synods, "in any action which may seem to be demanded by our relation to the General Assembly."

A critical issue facing the 1857 New School Assembly was an overture from its Synod of Western Reserve in Ohio, requesting that the Assembly order the Synod of Mississippi to direct the Presbytery of Lexington-South to place the Rev. William E. Holley on trial for having stated that he owned slaves "of choice and from principle." The Assembly went further, adopting resolutions that exhorted "all our people to eschew" such doctrines as that "slavery is an ordinance of God," or that in the United States it is "scriptural and right."[115] While these events were taking place, the Supreme Court published its famous *Dred Scott* decision, declaring that slaves were property and not to be considered citizens, and hence they had no recourse in federal courts. This emboldened slave owners, and in April 1858, a convention was held in Knoxville, Tennessee, to lay plans for a Southern New School Assembly. Their goal was singular, for as Harold M. Parker, the 20th century scholar of the Southern New School Church, observed, they wished "to form a Presbyterian Church in which the issue of slavery would not be discussed."[116]

The convention adopted a name for the new denomination, "The United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." The Knoxville convention entertained the thought that a reunion with the Old School Church might be possible, given that the Old School had refrained since 1836 from discussing slavery at its General Assemblies. However, when the idea came before the Old School Assembly, conditions were imposed that most New School Southerners could not accept.[117]

The New School Synod of Mississippi did not send representatives to the Knoxville convention, but in reviewing the past actions of the New School Assembly, the Synod of Mississippi resented the fact that slavery had for years been singled out, "its evils and abuses harped upon and held up for reproof and rebuke, for year to year, as if they were the only evils under the sun," as well as the General Assembly's condemnation of Mississippi's Lexington Presbytery for retaining slave owners in its communion. Accordingly, it voted to affiliate with the United Synod, following the lead of its three presbyteries, which had already taken this action.[118]

The Rev. Alexander Newton, who came to the state in 1829, was a leading New School minister in Mississippi, serving churches in Carroll, Madison, Warren, and Hinds counties. He was a strong advocate for the secession of the Mississippi synod from the New School Assembly. Walter Posey has observed that the division over slavery brought a lesson, "that any further dividing meant a dangerous lessening of the force of the church in great issues [as] Slave owner and church member were usually the same person."[119]

Despite its resolve in 1836 to discontinue discussion of slavery's morality, subsequent General Assemblies of the Old School Church received memorials demanding a deliverance against the practice. In 1844, 20 memorials were presented, and in 1845, so many came in that a special committee was appointed to prepare a report. The Rev.

[114] Parker, *The United Synod of the South*, 128-31; Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 44.

[115] Parker, *The United Synod of the South*, 139-40.

[116] Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, in Henry Warner Bowden, ed., *Denominations in America* 5 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993): 67.

[117] Parker, *The United Synod of the South* 177-81.

[118] Parker, *The United Synod of the South*, 198.

[119] "History of Presbyterians in Mississippi," 394-96; see Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 326.

N. L. Rice, of Kentucky, characterized as "the ablest fence walker in the Church," moderated the committee, and its report, as adopted by the Assembly, was generally perceived as sidestepping any condemnation of slaveholding.

In 1849, in response to protests against its action in 1845, the Assembly resolved that, "In view of the civil and domestic nature of this institution and the competency of our secular legislatures alone to remove it . . . it is considered peculiarly improper and inexpedient for this General Assembly to attempt or propose measures in the work of emancipation." As Shelton Smith observed, "Old School leaders in the South had every reason to rejoice, for their church had at last taken the moral position for which they had long contended. . . . The question was laid to rest in the Assembly until the guns of Sumter inaugurated the Civil War."[120]

A Presbyterian Planter's Slaves Were Supposed to be "Part of His 'Family'"

In spite of relations of affection that, by some accounts, existed between masters and slaves in the antebellum period, there was an undeniable economic aspect to the relationship. For some, the labor of slaves was immensely profitable; others incurred loss and trouble. Emma Finley, a Holly Springs Presbyterian whose father owned Woodland Plantation in Marshall County, wrote in her diary in 1858 that, "Aunt Sarah & Henry came down Sunday. They have had a great deal of sickness, lost four or five Negroes. . . ." On another vacation while visiting at Strawberry Plains, her uncle's place near Holly Springs, Emma's older brother George went out with his Uncle Davis in search of a runaway slave.[121]

It is a truism, as Margaret DesChamps Moore has observed, that the effect of the clergy in ameliorating the worst effects of slaveholding in Mississippi was slight, for "people had come to Mississippi to make money from slave operated cotton plantations." This is not to say that Presbyterians did not make some efforts to moderate the inhumane conditions under which slaves lived. The Church encouraged a sort of paternalism toward slaves. A planter's Negroes were part of his "family." Accordingly, certain religious obligations followed. Owners were urged to teach their slaves the basic principles of the gospel, to catechize them, and not to deny them other religious privileges, including church attendance and baptism. House servants were to be included in the family's daily devotions. Presbyterian ministers in Mississippi generally tried to reconcile the inevitable presence of slavery with what they called "biblical principles," working to mollify the cruelest features of the slave system. Presbyterians argued, for instance, that the covenantal obligations of parents toward children applied also to slaves.[122]

Accordingly, from the times of early settlement, the communicant membership of many Mississippi Presbyterian churches included not only whites, but also Native Americans and African slaves. Indeed, the Presbyterian denominations had a higher percentage of Black members in that era than in the late 20th or early 21st centuries. Rural congregations generally had a larger portion of their membership in slaves than did Presbyterian churches in the towns and cities. The register at Hopewell Church in Lafayette County lists the names of 43 "Colored Members." In Mississippi, the slave membership in a few white-controlled Presbyterian congregations, such as Unity in Amite County, actually outnumbered the white. Zion and Monroe Churches in Pontotoc County also had as many or more Black members as white. The Rev. A. J. Witherspoon of Zion was one minister remembered for work with his congregation's Black members. At Pine Ridge Church near Natchez, it was recorded in 1833 that "the congregation of Black people amounted to upwards of 200 souls." But as the church's historian noted, "The only requirement different from the white congregation [for admission to the church through profession of faith or by transferring to another church] was that they must have their owner's permission."[123]

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[120] See *The Story of Religion in America,* 1950 ed., 306-07; Smith, *In His Image,,,But*, 94.

[121] Diary of Emma Finley (September 5, 1858, April 8, 1859), cited in Robert Milton Winter, ed., *Our Pen Is Time: The Diary of Emma Finley* (Lafayette, Calif.: Thomas-Berryhill Press, 1999): 24, 69.

[122] Margaret DesChamps Moore, "Protestantism in the Mississippi Territory," *Journal of Mississippi History* 29 (November 1967): 369; W. Harrison Daniel, "Southern Presbyterians and the Negro in the Early National Period," *Journal of Negro History* 58 (July 1983): 291-312; *Southern Presbyterian Review* 8 (October 1854): 270.

[123] "Religion in Amite County," 69-70; Andrew Jackson Witherspoon, who later became an agent for the Board of Foreign Missions, was born in Lancaster County, South Carolina, and after serving small churches in Alabama, while preparing

A slave woman was baptized at Pine Ridge as early as April 1833. The first baptism of an African American infant in the Natchez Church appears in the register under the date of July 10, 1840, when the Rev. Samuel G. Winchester baptized Lucy Aline, daughter of Robert D. and Ann Smith, born November 22, 1839. At Hudsonville in the northern part of the state, the session clerk noted one occasion, August 30, 1840, when ten Black children were baptized, "their parents all being members of this church."[124]

In the early part of the 19th century, Southern Presbyterians such as John Holt Rice and Robert Lewis Dabney had expressed doubts about slavery. But as time passed, economic and social conditions had altered views so thoroughly that efforts to ameliorate conditions was all that could be proposed. Mississippi's Poindexter Code (1821), for example, provided that Blacks could only assemble to worship with their master's written consent and that at least two whites must be present. It also forbade free Blacks and mulattoes from serving as ministers. Whereas in Kentucky and Tennessee there was no legal restriction against the education of Blacks, so that the Transylvania Presbytery had in 1794 ordered all persons within its bounds to teach slaves under 15 years of age to read the Bible, in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana it was against the law to teach a slave to read. Thus, the Old School General Assembly urged on several occasions through the years that slaves be instructed in matters concerning religious truth, carefully stating that the instruction was to be oral. Slaves were to be taught the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, and the catechism.

In 1825, Mississippi Presbytery lamented the spiritual condition of the Black population: "They possess immortal souls, as well as we. . . . But the means of grace are not generally afforded them." The presbytery believed a prejudice existed among some of the slaves against Christianity, "strengthened by the inconsistent conduct of some professors of religion amongst them, and the hypocrisy of others." The presbytery suggested that "If a correct knowledge of the Gospel, were communicated to them, the hypocrite would be more easily detected, and the humble believer would know how he ought to walk." To further their instruction, the formation of a class was reported, studying a catechism, with 47 bondspeople enrolled.[125]

On November 1, 1834, the Synod of South Mississippi and Alabama adopted a lengthy statement concerning its ministry to slaves. The statement seemed to challenge some of the strictures against such labor imposed by individual owners as well as the state. Noting that in the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama,

> All of which, except the northern part of the last-mentioned State, are included in this Synod, the laws prohibit us from teaching the colored people to read, and we are, therefore entirely restricted to oral instruction, which renders the communication of knowledge far more tedious, though it by no means cancels the obligation. All our ministers feel a deep interest in the instruction of this part of our population, and when prudently conducted, they meet with no opposition in preaching to them. Some of us, owing to peculiar circumstances, have no opportunity for preaching to them separately, but embrace every favorable opportunity; others devote a portion of every other Sabbath to them; others, the half of every Sabbath; and two of our number, preach to them exclusively. We all feel that they are a part of our congregation, for whose salvation we are responsible, and, therefore, we do not neglect, but plainly and familiarly instruct them as we have opportunity. . . . We regard them as creatures of the same God, with the same plan of salvation; and we therefore labor to prepare them for the same heaven. And although our efforts have not been crowned with all the desired success, yet from the good which has already resulted we are encouraged to feel solemnly bound to persevere in this labor of love.

for the ministry, came to the neighborhood of Zion Church near Tupelo. Known in the congregation as "Cousin Jack," he is remembered for his work at a famous Southern Presbyterian mission, known as the Seamen's Bethel, of New Orleans. P. F. Witherspoon, "The Fruitage of Old Zion Church;" Lambdin, *Brief History of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church*, 8.

[124] Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez*, 36.

[125] *Extracts from the Minutes of the Mississippi Presbytery*, 18-19; see Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox Genovese, "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 70 (Spring 1986): 1-16.

This sentiment was carried out to some extent among ministers and congregations. In 1839, the Old School Synod of Mississippi commissioned two of its ministers, the Revs. James Smylie and William Montgomery, both slave owners with plantations, to prepare a catechism for slaves. Smylie prepared a widely used catechism for the religious instruction of slaves. Smylie's catechism, a copy of which does not appear to survive, was one of the first prepared for this purpose. Other catechisms, such as one by the Rev. Charles Colcock Jones, a Presbyterian minister in Georgia, were published and widely distributed. The prosperous Choctaw planter Greenwood LeFlore, a devout Presbyterian, employed a minister to preach to his 400 slaves each Sunday. Several Presbyterian ministers labored as chaplains to the slaves on plantations near Natchez—a method of outreach that did not require the gathering of slaves into congregations with others from different plantations, and thus lessened the chance of their exposure to news of slave rebellions elsewhere in the country.[126]

One such missionary was the Rev. William C. Blair, who had originally come to Mississippi as a missionary to the Chickasaw Nation. Another was the Rev. Thomas G. Ogden, a scholarly preacher from Sussex County, New Jersey, who resided on plantations of John Hutchins, William Dunbar, A. C. Henderson, and Thomas Henderson, and preached to their slaves. Between 1849 and 1852, the Rev. Joseph B. Stratton, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez, made frequent trips to William Ferriday's plantation on Concordia Lake in Louisiana, and on March 2, 1851, baptized nine and received them into the membership of the Church. Stratton also administered the Holy Communion to slaves at plantation locations. On December 22, 1854, he visited two Black men at their prison, where they were awaiting execution for murder. The Rev. S. P. Helme ministered to slaves in Lowndes County. Another Mississippi Presbyterian, the Rev. B. W. Williams, writing on September 4, 1831, ambitiously laid out a plan to General John A. Quitman, a Mississippi planter, whereby Williams would take care of about nine plantations.[127]

In 1825, the General Assembly noticed with pleasure "the enlightened attention which has been paid to the religious instruction and evangelizing of the unhappy slaves and free people of color of our country, in some regions of our church." Among the presbyteries commended was the Presbytery of Mississippi. Blake Touchstone observes that "These evangelicals were proving to doubting planters that they could be trusted among slaves."[128] For example, on March 18, 1854, the people of College Hill offered the Rev. Asahel Enloe "all proper encouragement and assistance in the oral & ministerial instruction of our slaves." The church appointed a slave, George, who belonged to A. J. Lewis, to act as elder over the other slave members. When his death was noted by the session at its meeting, July 17, 1862, another slave named Elisha, belonging to E. M. Matthews, was appointed in his place. The church also arranged to employ "Mr. Boyd's negro [*sic*] man . . . at one dollar a month to clean the church and open and shut the doors." The elders of the same church urged on September 28, 1858, "that the congregation

[126] See *Proslavery Thought*, 329; *The Slaves of Liberty: Freedom in Amite County,* Mississippi, 97. Dale Edwyna Smith, discussing James Smylie's work among the slaves in detail, observes that a catechism for slaves should not be misconstrued as a "concern for slaves," as such, since the catechisms were designed to help the slave get to heaven by being a diligent worker. The slave catechisms exalted work and taught that "wickedness" was the cause of laziness, and that "the master and mistress were gifts from God that must be obeyed."

[127] William P. Harrison, ed., *The Gospel among the Slaves* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, 1893): 84; [Thomas R. Markham], "Presbyterianism in Mississippi," *Southwestern Presbyterian* (November 20, 1890): 1; Smylie's catechism was prepared before the better known catechism developed for the same purpose by the Rev. Charles Colcock Jones; The Rev. Henry Pattillo, Presbyterian minister of North Carolina and forbear of Elder Robert H. Pattillo of Holly Springs, also prepared a catechism for slaves. See Henry Pattillo, *A Letter to Heads of Families, Containing a Catechism for Youth and a Catechism for Negroes* (manuscript in Union Presbyterian Seminary Library, Richmond, Virginia); Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez*, 36; Grafton, 476; see Williams' letter is cited in Charles S. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933): 57-58. On April 19, 1851, Chickasaw Presbytery urged its churches, "whenever practicable & expedient to institute Sab. Schools on the plan of Dr. [Charles Colcock] Jones, for the oral instruction of our coloured people."

[128] General Assembly action cited in Chisolm, 18; Blake Touchstone, "Planters and Slave Religion," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*, 100.

release their servants from field labors on Friday evening next and permit them to attend the services at the Church while they may."[129]

While severely restricted, Blacks played their part in the life of Mississippi's Presbyterian churches. A woman named Dinah early assisted the Rev. Thomas Stuart in his ministry to the Chickasaws. The Synod of Mississippi in 1845 purchased a Black slave preacher named Harrison Ellis and his family to be sent as missionaries to Liberia. By contrast, a few Presbyterian churches elsewhere held slaves for investment purposes, using the income from their labor to pay the salary of the pastor. Columbia Theological Seminary was aided in 1845 by an auction of eight slaves, along with some cattle and furniture, and the Presbyterian Church at Danville, Kentucky kept a slave named Isaac, who was responsible for cleaning the church under supervision of a committee of ladies.[130]

More ominously, in 1836—the year further discussion of the slave question was deferred—the Presbyterian General Assembly invested $94,000 in banks in the Southwest in anticipation of a high rate of interest made possible by a lively trade in slaves.[131]

The Rev. Joseph B. Stratton, pastor of the Natchez Church, carried on extensive ministry with the slave members of his congregation, as well as on nearby plantations in Louisiana. —Presbyterian Historical Society

Harrison Ellis—Slave Missionary

While various Presbyterian congregations in the South purchased slaves for use as laborers, the idea of purchasing a slave's freedom to serve as a missionary was a novelty. The enthusiasm shown for the plan illustrates both the paternalism as well as the uneasy conscience with which many Christians in the South held their property in human flesh. The Synod of Mississippi, in 1846, purchased Harrison Ellis, a black slave preacher and his family for $2,500 (thus giving profit from the slave-trading system to the Ellis family's owner), to be sent as missionaries to Liberia.

Harrison Walker Ellis was born into slavery and grew up in Tennessee. He began to teach himself to read when he was about nine. His interest was awakened by ministers, who stirred in him a desire to read the Bible for himself. Trained as a blacksmith, he would fix scraps of newspaper to the wall so that he could learn his letters while he worked at the forge, where he also studied Latin and Greek and developed a talent for the acquisition of languages. When he was about 25, he was sold to a planter in Greene County, Alabama, where he came under the influence of the Rev. John Hannah Gray, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Eutaw. Ellis was still a slave when his remarkable intellect came to be recognized. He studied under the direction of the Rev. Charles A. Stillman (for whom Stillman College was named), who succeeded Gray at Eutaw. Publicity about Ellis prompted the Synod of Alabama, along with the Synod of Mississippi, to raise funds to buy him, his wife Celia, and their two children, so that he could be sent to Africa as a missionary. There was wide support for this effort, including a contribution

[129] Sessional records of College Hill Presbyterian Church, cited in Lee, *Early Records of College Hill Church*, 5, 80.

[130] Sydnor, 57n, 59-60, 218; Grafton, 120-23; Frances Allen Cabaniss and James Allen Cabaniss, "Religion in Antebellum Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 6 (1944): 222; Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, 74; William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle In Both Hemispheres; With A View of The Slavery Question In The United States* (New York: William Harned, 1852): 154n; Richard C. Brown, *The Presbyterians: Two Hundred Years in Danville, 1784-1984* (Danville: The Presbyterian Church, 1983): 30.

[131] See Samuel J. Baird, *A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church, from its Origin in America to the Present Time…* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1855): 826-28. See John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984); *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord.*

of $4.00 from the bondsmen of Bethel Church, near Columbus, Mississippi. Ellis went on to become pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Monrovia, Liberia. Ellis died in Liberia in 1870.

There Was Some Southern Interest in Emancipation

There was some modest Southern interest in emancipation and particularly in the resettling of freed slaves—this as much to avoid agitation among Blacks who remained in bondage. One organization devoted to this interest was the American Colonization Society. In the era before the various Protestant communions fully consolidated their various forms of outreach into denominational boards, there was widespread support for a great variety of non-denominational and trans-denominational enterprises devoted to this or that cause, chief among which were scripture distribution and outreach to Native Americans and slaves. The American Colonization Society was one such enterprise. It gained some support in the Natchez vicinity, as well as among the students and faculty at Oakland College. Organized in 1817, at a meeting in the chamber of the U. S. House of Representatives in Washington, over which Henry Clay presided, the American Colonization Society hoped to transport emancipated slaves to Africa and settle them in a country of their own, Liberia. The society described slavery as "the greatest blot" on the country's annals, and in 1819 received the hearty endorsement of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Eventually, the society purchased 40,000 square miles and transported 20,000 persons to the newly-established Republic of Liberia, and the first shipload left New York on February 6, 1820. But the growing profitability of slavery after the invention of the cotton gin crimped the society's efforts in the Deep South.

The movement was controversial among both Blacks and whites from the outset. Many abolitionists spoke out for emancipation and freedom in the U. S., not in Africa. Abraham Lincoln supported the movement until he decided it was unworkable. For these and other reasons, support for it in Mississippi was limited. Charles Sydnor has argued that Mississippi support for the colonization movement was in large part motivated by wariness of Natchez area slaveholders of free Blacks who lived in that city and their suspicion that some might actively agitate and create dissent among the slaves. This generalized anxiety was accentuated in the 1830s as rumors reached Mississippi of slave insurrections in Virginia and North Carolina. In 1831, a law was promoted, which would have required all adult free Blacks to leave the state.[132]

The colonization movement received a great deal of support from Old School Presbyterians. In 1833, the Presbytery of Mississippi contributed $100 to the society, pledging an equal sum annually for the next ten years. The Synod of Mississippi commended the work of the American Colonization Society at its meeting, October 27, 1838, calling for the establishment of a colony by the name of Mississippi in Liberia. The resolution also asked the Board of Foreign Missions to appoint a missionary to the projected colony as soon as possible. Cumberland Presbyterians also supported the work of the colonization societies.

The Mississippi branch of the society met in the Natchez Presbyterian Church, December 12, 1838. At least three of its officers were Presbyterians, the Revs. Zebulon Butler of Port Gibson, Jeremiah Chamberlain, president of Oakland College, and Benjamin Chase, who served at Carmel Church near Kingston. Presbyterian elders, such as David Hunt of Rodney, gave large sums to its work. The Natchez Church gave generous amounts to the society throughout the 1840s and '50s. The sessional record of the Natchez Church, January 7, 1859, states that two members of the congregation, Rosalie Jones and Sarah Cecil Jones, were dismissed to Liberia, evidently sent by the Colonization Society. By some accounts, as many as 600 Blacks were sent to Liberia from Mississippi, most from the Natchez vicinity. Natchez was the only town in the state to have a large free Black population. The free Blacks of Natchez had little interest in moving to Africa. The colonization effort, while not strong in Mississippi, may have given impetus to the synod's effort to send a missioner to Liberia. However, it soon became apparent

[132] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:289, 332, 334-35; Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005); Sydnor, 203-206.

that the colonization effort would never work. The number of ex-slaves repatriated to Africa failed to equal the natural increase of the slave population.[133]

Oakland College Students Supported Colonization Society

Presbyterians were desirous of a college founded upon the principles of their belief. Oakland College, situated among the fertile cotton lands of Claiborne County in 1830, was the result. The students of the college, many of them sons of wealthy slave owners, were for the most part religious. Students and faculty contributed $3,000 annually to the Bible Society, Tract Cause, American Sabbath School Union, and other church boards. They supported a missionary to China, the Natchez Orphan Asylum, and the Mississippi Colonization Society, dedicated to repatriating freed slaves to Africa. Ironically, the Rev. Jeremiah Chamberlain, the college's first president, was assassinated by a disgruntled states' rights supporter in the excitement surrounding the Compromise of 1850.

Slave Marriages Were Not Recognized in Law

The United States did not give legal sanction to slave marriages. Some Mississippi Presbyterians felt pangs of conscience to keep slave families intact. William McGowan, who was born in County Antrim, Ireland, and came from South Carolina to settle on a plantation in southeast Marshall County, made provision in his will (filed January 26, 1852), that in the division of his estate among his heirs, "I wish it to be especially borne in mind, that families of my servants are not to be separated without urgent necessity therefor [*sic*]. . . ." Members of McGowan's family were members of Spring Creek Presbyterian Church, near Waterford.[134]

A disciplinary case in the records of the Natchez Church on March 1, 1862, bears an ironic witness to the fact that slaves could not legally marry in Mississippi:

> The session having been made acquainted by common rumor, and the express testimony of her mistress that Eliza Phenix, a colored member of this church, had been acting in an unchristian and scandalous manner in having absented herself for a long time from the worship and ordinances of the church, and having twice during that period become a mother without being in wedlock, it was resolved that in view of aggravated and persistent misconduct [that] the name of the said Eliza Phenix be stricken from the roll of members.

Phenix apparently did not testify, and as a case of alleged theft by a slave tried before the same session in the autumn of 1856 made clear, the testimony of Blacks was not considered. In that case, the session resolved that, "While the evidence produced sustains the charges against the said Ellen, the session deems it best to take into view . . . only such items as were proven by the testimony of white persons."[135]

In the meantime, slaves did marry, claiming for themselves an ordinance that the state did not sanction. Emma Finley, a young member of the Holly Springs Presbyterian Church and daughter of a plantation family, told her diary in October 1858, of such a marriage:

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[133] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (October 27, 1838); Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez*, 31, 50-51; see "The Mississippi Colonization Society," in Charles S. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1965): 203-38; *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 84; see Alan Huffman, *Mississippi in Africa* (New York: Gotham, 2004).

[134] Probate Records of Marshall County, Mississippi. Record Book 8:98.

[135] Sessional records of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez (November 1, 1856).

> There is to be a wedding tonight, the happy couple James & Julia Ann: -the *wardrobe* is almost completed, & cakes, pies, chickens, meats generally are in a state of preparation.[136]

The plantation owner usually officiated at such ceremonies, and of course, the master had the right to separate or sell married slaves and their children away from each other.

There can be no doubt that in providing what were called "religious privileges" to their bondspeople, church authorities and slave owners were motivated by a desire to control their property as well as to save their souls. Certainly, the religious exercises and instruction provided by slave owners and the Presbyterian Church were vastly different from that which evolved among the slaves themselves. That being said, from earliest times, there were Mississippi Presbyterians who believed that slaves should be given both religious instruction and opportunities for worship. In 1834, the Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama reported interest in the religious welfare of the slaves, declaring that, "All our ministers feel a deep interest in the instruction of this part of our population, and when prudently conducted we meet with no opposition."[137]

The Presbyterian whose work among Black people was greater than any other was the Rev. Charles Colcock Jones of Midway, Georgia. According to Jones, "almost all" ministers devoted a portion of the Sabbath to the slaves, and within the bounds of the two synods there were two or three missionaries to the slaves. These held that slaves must have the Bible read to them, since they could not read it for themselves. Slaves were to be taught the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, and in the Presbyterian Church, the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Hymns ranked next to the Bible in popularity among the slaves.[138]

Presbyterian slaves, of course, were not entitled to either voice or vote in the affairs of the Church, nor did they choose elders to represent their spiritual interests before the session. Slaves admitted to membership in the churches did not enjoy social status or privilege, at least among the white members. Those who were allowed to come into the towns for services were expected to be home by dark. Strict rules governed seating and movement about the church during services. Those who worshiped in the white-controlled churches were usually house servants who drove carriages or cared for children. Field hands or laborers, lacking a reason to accompany the white families, were organized into churches on or near the plantation where they lived. Planters complained that slaves permitted the freedom of the town for worship used the occasion for gossip and dissipation. Many kept their slaves at home, and, if they were interested in their religious instruction, controlled what was taught by employing a white minister. If the law allowed, other owners permitted their slaves to have one of their own to preach to them.[139]

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[136] Robert Milton Winter, *Our Pen Is Time*, 32.

[137] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama (1834), cited in E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:210; See Olli Alho, *The Religion of the Slaves: A Study of the Religious Tradition and Behavior of the Plantation Slaves in the United States, 1830-1865* (Helsinki, Finland: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1976).

[138] Cited in E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:434; Milton C. Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of Negro Christianity, 1787-1865* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1975).

[139] Perkins, "Religion for Slaves," 228-45. Slaves who enjoyed an affectionate relationship with their owners were usually house servants. Field hands often worked at considerable distance from the owner's home, and were placed under the supervision of overseers, who often had an incentive to be cruel.

Slaves' Names Preserved in Church Records

Unlike many denominations, Presbyterians kept detailed records, and slaves were named in the Church's baptismal and communicants' rolls (usually by a listing that followed the form, 'N., servant of . . .'). Thus, in states where slaves were not named in public records, baptism and admission to the Holy Communion in the Presbyterian Church gave African Americans a name and a dignity not otherwise accorded them in the records of society. A recorded Christian name (though not a surname)—in a Presbyterian session book is, in many cases is the only enduring record of their existence. Moreover, in ceremonies of infant baptism, the child is named—that is, the infant's Christian name is bestowed. This portion of the baptismal service is the "christening," a shortening of the call for the "Christian name."

Slave baptisms, however, presented an anomaly, for in Presbyterian practice, parents act as sponsors for their children, but under the requirements of civil law, it was the slave owner who had ultimate control. Permission from masters was, therefore, necessary to present children for baptism.

In Holly Springs, slaves who worshiped with masters were allowed to choose among the churches near the square, and there are records of a slave worshiping in one congregation, while the owner prayed in another. A comparison of Mississippi records with those of older communities in the Southeast—such as the low country of South Carolina—shows that a much smaller percentage of Mississippi slaves were members of Presbyterian churches.[140] Despite inequalities in this period, all received the Holy Communion from a common cup. Across the South in the Presbyterian Church, Blacks received the Holy Communion at the hands of white ministers, receiving the sacred elements after all white communicants had been served. As time went on, more and more received the sacrament, "at their own tables"—that is, in services separate from whites. The Holly Springs session book notes that on November 7, 1841, the communion was administered to slaves at a separate service, with admonitions tailored to this community by the pastor, Daniel Baker:

> The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was this day administered. . . . In the afternoon, Sacrament administered after sermon to the colored congregation.

In similar fashion, Robert B. Alexander, a member of the Methodist Church in Holly Springs, recorded that on a Sunday afternoon, March 12, 1854, he "went to Negro preaching [in his church] and heard Mr. Stark." The sacrament was administered, and a collection received.[141] Earlier communions in Holly Springs were for the *entire* congregation, with the slaves coming forward to receive the consecrated elements from the same silver paten and chalice, after all the white communicants had been served. These occasions presented a paradox, for on the one hand, they presented an image of equality, with rich and poor seated together as God's elect at the table of His Son, but, on the other hand, the sacrament served to remind Blacks of their "place" in a hierarchical society, where rank was determined not only by birth and status, but even more fundamentally by race.[142] Baker gave this account of the admission of Black communicants during a service he conducted on one of his tours of Texas in 1839:[143]

> Sabbath, [April] 26th. Sacramental Sabbath. Preached in the morning from Mark 15:34. Had something of an unction. At the close of the sermon there was almost universal weeping. Brother McCalla being present, administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Twelve persons were admitted by the Session,

[140] Clement Eaton, *The Growth of Southern Civilization, 1790-1860* (New York: HarperCollins, 1961): 248.

[141] Diary and account ledger of Robert B. Alexander (March 12, 1854). Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[142] See Clarke, *Our Southern Zion*, 66-69; H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But...Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972).

[143] Texas was under authority of the Synod of Mississippi at this time.

all new converts save one. . . . During the recess [between the morning and afternoon services], called in the blacks, (who had been lingering about the doors and windows), and preached a sermon to them from these words, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good' (Psalm 34:8).[144]

Abolitionists criticized segregated sacramental celebrations, and in response to a report that he barred Black worshipers from the communion table, the Rev. James Smylie defended his region, saying that during his 31 years' residence in Mississippi and Louisiana, he had never known any person of any denomination "either so wicked or so proud, as to refuse a seat in the house of God, or at the Lord's table, to any person on account of his color *when there was room*."[145] Still, those who were owned as human property were constantly reminded of their unhappy situation even when attending religious services. As Andrew E. Murray has written,

The Negro Presbyterian in the South was constantly reminded of his inferior status as a member of the church. He had to sit in a segregated gallery, and, at least in one church, had to use a communion token made of base metal while his white fellow-communicants used a silver token. After all the white members had been served at the communion service, the slaves were invited to come to the table, each one handing his token to the elder serving the table before being allowed to take his seat.[146]

"Slave Balconies"

The old slave balcony and pews in Natchez First Presbyterian Church. R. Milton Winter photo

[144] William Baker, *The Life and Labours of the Rev. Daniel Baker, D.D., Pastor and Evangelist* (Philadelphia: Wm S. & Alfred Martien, 1858): 253-54.

[145] Smylie, *Review of a Letter, from the Presbytery of Chillicothe*, 4. Italics added.

[146] *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 62. The use of communion tokens has a rich history in Presbyterianism, going all the way back to Scotland in the Reformation era. Each person coming to the Lord's Supper was expected to appear before the session, demonstrating a knowledge of the sacrament, repentance for sins, and a desire to make a profitable use of the experience. A well-instructed communicant might be expected to recite the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. White children were schooled in the Westminster *Shorter Catechism*. Blacks might be taught from one of the slave catechisms. The First (Scots) Presbyterian Church of Charleston, South Carolina was one congregation which distributed tokens of silver to its white communicants, but issued tokens "of base metal" to its blacks; Mary McWhorter Tenney, *Communion Tokens: Their Origin and Use* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1936): 91-92. Edward G. Lilly, *Beyond the Burning Bush: First (Scots) Presbyterian Church, Charleston, South Carolina* (Charleston: Garner, 1971): 14-15, 71-72; George B. Burnet, *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland, 1560-1960.* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1960).

Called derisively "slave balconies" by abolitionists (the term "*balcony*" in the 19th century was usually reserved for theaters), lofts of southern as well as certain Eastern and Northern churches were called "servants' galleries" by those who built them, as if to soften the import of the bondage in which those who sat in them were held. High-minded slave owners argued that those who used these "galleries" were members of the household, whether their "service" was compensated with money or not. (The King James Version used the term "*servant*" for "slave," and it was the controversial pamphlet of the Rev. James Smylie of Amite County, in 1836, which pointed out to persons who could not read the New Testament in Greek the fact that the "servants" who were urged to obey their masters according to the wording of the King James Version in the Epistles of Paul and elsewhere were, in fact, *slaves*.) Smylie argued that slavery was a "positive good," and that any error in the institution stemmed from neglect of the duties superiors and inferiors owed each other—a theme that was set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and catechisms and taken up by slavery's defenders up to and through the Civil War.

The high balconies of Presbyterian churches such as Rodney, Port Gibson, and Holly Springs, like those of other old churches in Mississippi, were constructed as servants' galleries. In the 21st century, this fact stands as a judgment upon the Christianity and culture of antebellum slave owners. Yet, the communicant membership of all churches in that era was often a good deal more racially and economically diverse than at present.[147]

Walter Brownlow Posey has remarked that "By offering the slave a religion with a covenant of a better life in the future, the churches sought to make his condition bearable." Southern Presbyterians sought through their preaching to reinforce the institution of slavery with the teaching of Holy Writ. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has written, "For the southern slaveholders, any social order worthy of the name, and therefore its appropriate social relations, had to be grounded in divine sanction." Therefore, in the years just before the Civil War, ministers took time to explain how slavery was grounded in the Bible and to hammer home the responsibilities of slaves to their masters, as well as the duties of masters toward their slaves.[148]

Slaves generally listened to Presbyterian sermons on an intellectual plane above their ability to understand. For this reason, the number who joined the Presbyterian Church was small in comparison to the number who joined other communions—especially those with more popular forms of preaching. Posey writes that, "The intellectual appeal of the Presbyterian preacher had only slight effect on the Negro. Preaching man's depravity had no fresh attraction to a slave who already had suffered ignominy and shame." Bishop Benjamin T. Tanner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church put it best when he said that the Presbyterians:

> strove to lift up without coming down, and while the good Presbyterian parson was writing his discourses, rounding off the sentences, the Methodist itinerant had traveled 40 miles with his horse and saddle bags; while the parson was adjusting his spectacles to read his manuscript, the itinerant had given hell and damnation to his unrepentant hearers; while the disciple of Calvin was waiting to have his church completed, the disciple of Wesley took to the woods, and made them re-echo with the voice of free grace.[149]

The vast number of Blacks who joined white churches prior to the Civil War were Methodist or Baptist, with Methodists claiming the largest number in Mississippi. By various estimates from 260,000 to 500,000 enslaved persons were members of Southern churches prior to their emancipation. Figures for Presbyterian slave membership vary from 7,000 to 20,000—with the largest number residing in South Carolina.[150]

When preaching to Negroes, Presbyterians talked much about sins: quarreling, drinking, stealing, and immoral living and emphasized texts such as Ephesians 6:5: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters

[147] See Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Rock*, 156.

[148] Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 411; Fox-Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of Social Order," 211.

[149] Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 411.

[150] See Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1921): 97.

according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ." Other favorite texts were Genesis 3:19, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," and Matthew 25:21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." In spite of such sober pulpit fare, calculated, as it was, to produce submission and obedience, the Rev. John Clarke Young, of Danville, Kentucky, reported to a friend in May 1847 that his church received 120 new members, of whom "about 25 were Blacks." Preachers of integrity reinforced the duties of slave owners. Young published a sermon entitled, "The Duties of Masters."[151]

On October 1, 1853, Chickasaw Presbytery appointed the Rev. J. Weatherby and Mr. James N. Harper "to organize a church of the servants, on the Hurd Plantation"—a location not now known. There is no report in the minutes that this particular congregation was formally organized. The session at College Hill resolved March 18, 1854, "That we as a congregation make the effort by subscription [to] raise the means to build near College Church an African Church where our slaves can be comfortably accommodated and instructed every Sabbath. . . ."[152]

Soon after his arrival in Natchez, the Rev. Joseph B. Stratton preached to his African-American members each Sunday afternoon in the session house. The Natchez Church built a chapel in 1847 for the use of its congregational Sabbath school, as well as preaching services for its Black members on Sunday afternoon or evenings. On April 26, 1863, a Sabbath school for the African American children was inaugurated in this building.[153]

Southern Presbyterian slave owners also recognized their self-interest in preaching to the slaves. The gospel, as presented by their ministers, was intended to help prevent much-feared slave rebellions and keep the bondsmen under control. A pastoral letter issued in 1859 by Tombeckbee Presbytery on "The Religious Instruction of our Colored Population," emphasized this theme: "The negroes [*sic*] are more easily governed where the Gospel exerts its influence on them. . . . In the Christian elevation of our servants, in a great degree lies the safety of the South."[154]

Slaves were subjected to standards of admission and discipline as were whites—a discipline, which in the 19th century was strict for white and Black alike. Enforcement of these standards was obviously not the same for both groups. At Bethany Church in South Mississippi, a slave named Jacob was suspended from the ordinances of the Church "for beating his wife and giving threatening language to his mistress." Andrew E. Murray has pointed out that while Southern church courts were "full of disciplinary actions against members guilty of drunkenness, adultery, and other breaches of the moral code . . . there were few references to the discipline of slaveholders," and none in Mississippi against the practice of slavery itself. Owners were, on occasion, brought before sessions for abuse of slaves but were generally not punished as severely as slaves accused of similar crimes against whites.[155]

Slave owners had powers of life and death over their "property," which the Church made some attempt to moderate. At Pisgah Presbyterian Church in Amite County, a member named William Thompson was called before the session after he "cruelly whipped a slave." The elders of College Hill called J. L. Tankersley to answer a charge that he had disciplined a female slave so severely that she died. Tankersley alleged that the woman had become "unmanageable, rude, and insolent, setting at defiance all authority, and insulting the female members of the family, breaking into the dwelling house, smoke house, etc.," so that he intended nothing more than a correction, "such as the offenses would justify." He fired a shot "only for warning," which unfortunately inflicted a wound that resulted in the slave's death. Without receiving testimony on behalf of the slave, the elders ruled that the provocation leading to the act was intolerable, and if allowed to continue would "annihilate all family government." Tankersley was absolved and commended to the fellowship of the church.[156]

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[151] Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 216; Woodson, 97-98; see William T. Hamilton, *The Duties of Masters and Slaves Respectively: or Domestic Servitude as Sanctioned by the Bible. A Discourse Delivered in the Government-Street [Presbyterian] Church, Mobile, Alabama* (Mobile: F. H. Brooks, 1845); Brown, *The Presbyterians: Two Hundred Years in Danville*, 31.

[152] Lee, Lee, *Early Records of College Hill Church*, 18.

[153] Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez*, 39, 74.

[154] Cited in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* 12 (July 1859): 355.

[155] Sessional records of Bethany [Mississippi] Presbyterian Church, 1823-1874 (December 22, 1827); *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 19.

[156] Pisgah Church records in Albert E. Casey, *et. al., Amite County, Mississippi, 1699-1865*, 3 vols. (Birmingham: Amite County Historical Fund, 1948): 2:94, 102, 106; Maud Morrow Brown, "The War Comes to College Hill," *Journal of*

As the federal union teetered on the brink of dissolution, worries over slave insurrections grew. In the light of such fears, the Natchez Church instituted a new and stricter oversight of its Black congregants. While couched in a benevolent tone, it also involved closer inspection of their lives and activities. According to the sessional record for March 9, 1859:

> The following Resolutions were unanimously adopted. Resolved, that for the better supervision and care of the colored branch of this church we deemed it expedient to obtain the aid of certain judicious persons of their own class in maintaining order amongst them. . . . These persons shall be called Visitors, and their duties shall be as follows—
>
> 1st. To endeavor to set before their fellow members an example of Christian character and conduct.
>
> 2nd. To observe a brotherly guardianship over their fellow Christians, not by exercising authority but by kindly noticing and inquiry into their religious characters and walk.
>
> 3rd. To mention to the Session every case in which they have evidence that a church member is conducting himself irregularly.
>
> 4th. To act as a medium through which any member may make known to the Session his wants, difficulties, and grievances.
>
> 5th. To give counsel in religious exercises in a sickroom, or at a funeral, and to perform such other services as the Pastor may request.
>
> 6th. To make during the week preceding each communion a short report to the Session stating the general conditions of the Colored Church.
>
> Resolved, that the members be expected to look upon these Brethren with kindness and confidence, and to give them all encouragement in their efforts to promote the order and purity of the flock of Christ.

Slave Cemeteries

Many old Presbyterian cemeteries throughout Mississippi preserve the graves of slaves buried near their former masters. At College Hill and Hopewell churches, both in Lafayette County, some tombstones are still legible, a reminder that there is no slavery or segregation in death. Research is ongoing at Red Banks, in the cemetery across from the old Presbyterian Church, to ascertain the number and extent of slave burials in that large and historic burying ground. Camp Hopewell has also set out to record and recognize the slave burials there, which derive from the Hopewell Presbyterian congregation whose venerable house of worship now serves as the camp church.

As an illustration of the fears of slave revolts that many Mississippians nursed in this period, an account given by Mrs. Thomas L. Dunlap, a member of the Holly Springs Church is apt. Her story reached the ears of John Hill Aughey, a Holly Springs schoolmaster and critic of slavery who later entered the Presbyterian ministry. As Aughey recalled,

> Mrs. Dunlap informed me that she noticed a large gathering of their colored people at one of the cabins. Wishing to learn the cause, she slipped around to the back window, as the night was dark. . . . A well-dressed burly African, in an earnest tone, was haranguing them after this manner: 'I tells you, ladies and gentlemen, we is all gwine to be free befo' long. We won't be slaves no longer and be whipped and cuffed by de white folks.' 'How duz you know all dat?. . . .'Why, did'n' I hear Massa Jeff Davis say so?

Mississippi History 16 (January 1954): 22-30; see James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

> I done drove him out in de carriage to dat stan,' where he'd dressed de people today, en I had to wait to bring 'im back. From whut he sed de people uv de Norf is comin' down to set us free and de'll jes mow deze Southern people down like dey mows de grass.'[157]

As historian of the Natchez Church Anita Wisner has noted, "The session's directives of March 9, 1859, while an overt attempt at maintaining control, express some positive aspects. The new Visitors policy acknowledges the possible existence of Black grievances within the church, and at least a tacit willingness on the part of the white elders to address those grievances. On a more subtle level, the need for intermediaries to bridge the perceived gap between the two congregations within First Presbyterian also acknowledges a certain autonomy among the Black spiritual community as functioning effectively exclusively of the white church." Still, "If the church acted as a social agent to any degree, it must be realistically concluded that it implicitly served the interests of the planter class. . . . Properly or improperly, the church itself never officially in any sense fostered social or political equality. . . . Inevitably, the church was ill-prepared for the massive changes wrought by the Civil War and Emancipation.[158]

Old School Assembly Divides as Nation Descends into Civil War

By December 1861, the undivided Presbyterian General Assembly of 1836 had been scissored into four parts—each rift having been colored by slavery debates. The divisions represented not simply a propensity to disagree, but a complete failure of biblical authority. Scripture could not diffuse America's greatest crisis. Even in Mississippi, the marks of this failure were seen as much of the state was laid waste by what one historian has called "Cotton's War."[159] Mark Noll has written that, by this period, "Religion had reached a higher point of public influence than at any previous time in American history." Between one-third and two-fifths of Americans were members of Christian churches but estimates place those participating as probably double that. As Noll remarks, "In American society as a whole, there was no recognized authority greater than the individual interpretation of Scripture. . . . And in 1860 fundamental disagreement existed over what the Bible had to say about slavery at the very moment when disputes over slavery were creating the most serious crisis in the nation's history."

Noll asserts further that, "If we keep in mind that it was never only a matter of interpreting individual biblical texts, but always a question of putting actively to use the authoritative Book on which the national culture of the United States had been built, then we are in a position to understand why in 1860 battles over the Bible were so important, and why divergent views of providence cut so deeply."[160] During this period, many Americans were discovering that the Bible they had relied upon was "not nearly as univocal, not nearly as easy to interpret," not nearly as unifying for an overwhelmingly Christian people, as they had once thought. An even larger problem arose because so many of the nation's religious leaders believed they saw clearly, and that all religious questions could be resolved by appeals made to obvious, "commonsense" interpretations of the Bible, as made by ordinary people.[161] In no matter was this believed to be more true than with slavery.

The Protestant literal method of interpretation had helped build a biblical civilization—actually two civilizations—one that supported, the other that opposed, slavery. Both abolitionists and defenders of slavery staked their claims on what they saw as the clear teaching of the Bible.[162] Each side was selective in the passages

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[157] John Hill Aughey, *The Iron Furnace, or, Slavery and Secession* (Philadelphia: Alfred S. Martien, 1863); *Tupelo: Or the Iron Furnace* (Lincoln, Neb.: State Journal Co., Printers, 1888; rev. ed., 1905): 392-93.

[158] Anita Wisner, "A Southern Church: The First Presbyterian of Natchez" (unpublished research paper, 1992): 18-19. Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[159] See Stephen Yafa, *Big Cotton: How a Humble Fiber Created Fortunes, Wrecked Civilizations, and Put America on the Map* (New York: Viking, 2005).

[160] Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 28-29.

[161] Noll, *Civil War as a Theological* Crisis, 10-11, 32-33, 21.

[162] Passages cited by abolitionists included "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14; and James 2:8, as well as Philemon v. 16, where Philemon is instructed concerning

it used. The question was: Did one set of passages overrule the other? How did "slaves obey your masters" relate to "love thy neighbor as thyself?" This verse-for-verse method of discerning scriptural truth could not reconcile the divergent interpretations that arose. Again, to cite Noll, "The obvious crisis that bore directly on the fate of the nation was that 'simple' readings of the Bible yielded violently to incommensurate understandings of Scripture, with no means, short of warfare to adjudicate the differences." The resulting Civil War division of the country's ardent Bible believers and defenders called into question the reputation of scripture as an all-purpose, infallible authority for faith and practice. Indeed, as Noll wryly observes, "It would remain for those two great theologians, Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman," to bring a final resolution of the slavery question. As if to personify the matter, President James Buchanan, a kindly Presbyterian from Pennsylvania, who had received Mississippi's electoral votes, presided impotently in the White House, unable, it seemed, to do anything to retard the anger of a nation hurtling toward war.[163]

When South Carolina threatened to leave the Union in 1832, most Mississippians did not favor secession, but attitudes changed during the next 29 years. The reasons for the change included controversy arising from the Fugitive Slave Law, the struggle over slavery in Kansas, the increasing power of the Republican Party, the election of Lincoln, and the basic social, religious, and economic differences that arose between the sections. Mississippi Presbyterians were active in all these discussions, giving leadership to various viewpoints in high places throughout the state and the nation. By 1860 there were 148 Presbyterian churches in Mississippi. John K. Bettersworth has remarked that, "For the most part they were . . . attended by the educated, liberally inclined, and wealthy element in Mississippi society."[164] Statewide, Presbyterians were influential. Although the Church never sought to be popular or to enroll the masses, the opinions of Presbyterians carried weight in politics. This fact is interesting since most Presbyterian ministers carefully avoided partisan pronouncements from the pulpit. For example, at Columbus, prior to delivering his sermon on a June Sunday in 1861, the Rev. James A. Lyon recorded in his journal that he had "devoted a long preliminary to this sermon in inveighing against letting down and prostituting the pulpit . . . which has been done to a most lamentable extent by nearly all the [preachers] in the land."[165] But ministers were powerful molders of opinion, and Presbyterians, being the best educated and often teaching in schools and colleges, as well as preaching, shaped ideas throughout the state. Many, if not most, of the state's Presbyterian ministers, had been reared or educated outside the South, and a fair proportion did not share the secession fever. Scholars have noted that some Presbyterian ministers in Mississippi were a moderating influence, and a few were outright unionists throughout the Civil War.[166] Many, if not most, however, supported slavery and secession.

The New School Presbyterian Assembly had split on the slavery issue in 1857 because of the threat of disciplinary action against slaveholders. The Old School Church, of which the lion's share of Mississippi Presbyterians was part, had become much more cautious in dealing with slavery after the expulsion of its New School synods. The Old School Presbyterian Church was the last major American institution to remain undivided

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the returning slave Epaphras to "receive him . . . not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother." Defenders of slavery quoted Ephesians 6:5, "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ," and Colossians 3:22, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God."

[163] Noll, *Civil War as a Theological* Crisis, 22-23, 396-97; Mark Noll, "The Bible and Slavery," in *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 386-401.

[164] Margaret DesChamps Moore, "Religion in Mississippi in 1860," *Journal of Mississippi History* 22 (1960): 225; James J. Pillar, "Religious and Cultural Life, 1817-1860," in McLemore, *A History of Mississippi*, 1:378-79.

[165] John K. Bettersworth, "Mississippi Unionism: The Case of the Rev. James A. Lyon," *Journal of Mississippi History* 1 (1939): 39; William C. Harris, "The Southern Unionist Critique of the Civil War," *Civil War History* 31 (March 1985): 39-56.

[166] Pillar, "Religious and Cultural Life," 1:385; Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Thomas D. Cockrell, "Unionism in Civil War North Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 75 (Winter 2013): 57-70.

as the war began, the Democratic Party having divided into Northern and Southern constituencies during the 1860 presidential campaign.[167]

South Mississippi Presbyterian Elder David Hunt Predicted Ruin from Civil War

Perhaps the best known and most generous Mississippi Presbyterian elder of the pre-Civil War period was David Hunt, who lived on his plantation Woodlawn in rural Jefferson County seven miles from Rodney. Born and reared in New Jersey, Hunt had come to Mississippi in young manhood, and was very successful in business and agriculture. Known for his generosity, he helped many others establish themselves as planters, never charging more than 6% and forgiving interest payments when the river overflowed. An influential supporter of the American Colonization Society, he is said to have emancipated 1,700 African Americans. His generosity to the educational work of Mississippi Presbyterians has been noted. Widely traveled and familiar with both sections, he predicted ruin for the South should the region secede. When word of the firing at Fort Sumter came, Hunt was on his deathbed. He told those near him, "They will wipe us out, mark the words of a dying man, they will wipe us out. I know too well the strength of both sections." After the war, his widowed family moved to Cincinnati.[168]

Divided Opinion Rends the Churches

Cyrus McCormick, the wealthy Chicago Presbyterian industrialist and philanthropist, a Virginian by birth, was accustomed to speak of the Old School Presbyterian Church and the Democratic Party as "the two hoops which held the union together." One by one, as the bands were broken, both nation and church were torn apart and given that the division of the church was inevitable once the states seceded and shots were fired, it is a remarkable fact that the Old School Presbyterian Church held together as long as it did. Still, as John N. Waddel observed, "Among those matters which were brought into collision in this disastrous period of our history, none were more seriously affected and threatened than those of the churches, and especially the Presbyterian Church." The slavery question lay at the root of the matter.

In the wake of controversy over the annexation of Texas and the expansion of slavery into its territory, Methodists had divided in 1844. The Baptists followed suit in 1845, leaving John C. Calhoun to lament that "nothing will be left to hold the States together except force."[169] The Episcopal Church, with one-third of its members in the South, had avoided taking a position on slavery, and its General Convention, which met every third year, was not scheduled to meet until 1862. Most Episcopalians followed the course of the Diocese of Louisiana, led by Bishop Leonidas Polk, which resolved that Episcopal Churches "are not political crusaders, but simple and guileless teachers" of the gospel, and did not "dogmatize on civil relations or the rights of individuals." Polk served as a Confederate general and was killed in battle. Though the Episcopal Church inevitably divided, its reunion was easily accomplished as the Southern bishops quietly resumed their seats in the subsequent General Convention.

The Old School Church's strength in the South had given Southern elements in that branch of Presbyterianism greater influence in the church's national affairs than might otherwise have been expected. For example, at Princeton, where one-third to one-half of the students came from the South, theologian Charles Hodge defended the

[167] Lewis G. Vander Velde, *The Presbyterian Churches and the Federal Union, 1861-1869* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932): 21; cf. John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

[168] Dunbar Hunt, "Sketch of the Rev. David Hunt," *Minutes of the Presbyterian Historical Society of the Synod of Mississippi* (West Point, Miss.: West Point Leader, 1906): 4-9.

[169] Richard K. Crallé, ed., *The Works of John C. Calhoun*, Vol. 4, *Speeches of John C. Calhoun, Delivered in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States* (New York: D. Appleton, 1854): 557-58.

right to own slaves and argued that Scripture sanctioned the practice. The influential *Princeton Review* was seen as a friend of the South. Indeed, Larry E. Tise has shown that a great many pro-slavery tracts and sermons published in the South before the Civil War were written by Northern ministers who had come to Southern climes.[170]

Practically all anti-secession leadership in Mississippi came from Presbyterians. Perhaps this was because Presbyterians in both their Old and New School branches (as well as the Cumberland Presbyterian Church) remained part of a national church much longer than their Methodist and Baptist neighbors and were more conscious of ties to other regions, attending their respective General Assemblies (which were mostly held outside the South), or because Presbyterians, being generally more wealthy, and by nature conservative—foresaw the disruption and damage that would ensue should war come. A Mississippian wrote *The Jackson Southron* in 1845: "The Presbyterian clergy [indeed] I believe the great body of clergy of all denominations are Whigs, not because they are aristocrats but because they are opposed to radicalism, and in favor of conservatism," and as Margaret DesChamps Moore has remarked, "This conservatism was in large measure responsible for the lack of ministerial enthusiasm for secession. . . ."[171]

Mississippi Presbyterian Opposition to Secession

A great many Mississippi Presbyterians disliked slavery, even some who had slaves. For some, however, events tempered their initial reluctance to secession. Lawyer J. W. C. Watson, an elder in the Holly Springs Church and a senator for the Confederacy, early opposed secession, canvassing the state against it in 1860, but when Mississippi's secession ordinances were passed,[172] he could not persuade himself, as he said, to "go against his blood and kindred." In a similar way, former U. S. Senator Walter Brooke, head of a Presbyterian family in Vicksburg, opposed secession. He was a member of the Governor's Commission to other Southern states seeking some solution to the impending crisis. At the Mississippi secession convention, he spoke and voted against secession, but accepted the majority decision and served in the Confederate Congress.[173]

Official records of Mississippi Presbyterians tell relatively little about the war-related opinions or actions of individual members or church courts during the Civil War. A reader of session, presbytery, or synod records gains few hints that unusual events were taking place, except that there are shorter entries and regular meetings were sometimes missed. This reticence testifies to a near complete Mississippi Presbyterian adherence to a distinctive and then-current doctrinal tenet, usually referred to as the Spirituality of the Church. Ministers or elders might speak about what were seen as partisan or secular issues, but they seldom used the pulpit or church courts for such purposes. For instance, the Rev. Henry H. Paine, stated clerk of North Mississippi Presbytery, became a strong supporter of secession, but allowed himself only a few references to the war in his minutes for that body, simply noting in April 1863, that a presbytery commission had failed to meet, due to the "presence of the enemy in portions of our territory."[174]

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[170] Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 375-76; John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954): 15; Larry E. Tise, "The Interregional Profile of the Antebellum American Clergy," 58-72; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 188.

[171] Bodo, *Protestant Clergy and Public Issues*, 15; see Bettersworth, "Mississippi Unionism"; Moore, "Religion in Mississippi in 1860," 235.

[172] Glover Moore, "Separation from the Union, 1854-1861," in McLemore, *A History of Mississippi*, 1:420-46.

[173] *Goodspeed's Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Goodspeed, 1891), 2:996-98; Percy Lee Rainwater, *Mississippi: Storm Center of Secession 1856-1865* (Baton Rouge: O. Clayton 1938): 149; William Baskerville Hamilton, *Holly Springs, Mississippi to the Year 1878* (Holly Springs: Marshall County Historical Society 1984): 9; David N. Young, "The Mississippi Whigs, 1834-1860" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama 1968); Frank E. Everett Jr., *Mississippi in the Nineteenth Century* (Vicksburg: privately published, 1980): 53-54; Paul E. Herron, *Framing the Solid South: The State Constitutional Conventions of Secession, Reconstruction, and Redemption, 1860-1902* (Laurence, Kan.: University of Kansas Press, 2017): 75, 76, 80.

[174] Minutes of the Presbytery of North Mississippi (April 17, 1863).

Most Southern Presbyterians believed matters such as slavery and secession were not the concern of the pulpit. Ministers confined their preaching to discrete theological and ethical questions, ignoring the assertion of abolitionists that ownership of human beings and confiscation of the income from their labor *was* an ethical question. Meanwhile, the church courts warned against neglecting spiritual duties in the interest of "partisan" campaigns. Ministers did discuss political matters in the press, including the church press, where they were quoted as individuals, not as spokesmen for the Church. The doctrine of the Church's spirituality, held also by many Old School Presbyterians in the North, was one reason for the Church's increasing reluctance to speak against slavery after 1836.

Theologians such as James Henley Thornwell of South Carolina taught that church and state were "two distinct commonwealths, neither of which must usurp the sphere of the other." The Church was to take no notice of civil matters, as opposed to those in the sphere of faith and morals, which were its proper concern. In 1845, the Old School Assembly had declared that, "The Church of Christ is a spiritual body, whose jurisdiction extends only to the religious faith and moral conduct of her members."[175] Charles Hodge, an Old School leader, agreed that the Church had no "right to interfere in secular matters," yet also said there were times, "when political questions rise into the sphere of morals and religion." Hodge expressed amazement at what he called Thornwell's "new and startling doctrine of the church."[176]

Many Southern Presbyterians asserted further, that slavery was a purely civil and domestic relation, on which the Church had "no right to legislate." Many Northern Presbyterians were inclined to question this interpretation of the doctrine of the Church's spirituality, claiming it opposed the spirit and genius of Calvinism. They cited Knox's sermons in Scotland, as well as support for the American Revolution as instances of political involvement by Presbyterians. They also pointed out that Southerners had an economic interest in keeping the Church silent on the subjects of slavery and secession.[177]

Did Clergy Divide the Nation?

Walter Posey has observed that "Southern clergymen, particularly Presbyterians, became by their training and by their influence the leaders with the ability to speak and to write on controversial matters that arose before and during the Civil War." As the question of secession rose to fever heat, Presbyterians looked to their ministers for guidance, so that as Randy J. Sparks has remarked, "Southern clergymen were . . . willing to sacrifice national religious organizations on the altar of slavery when it became clear that their defense of the institution would deprive them of leadership positions within those organizations." Other scholars have identified Protestant clergy, and particularly leaders of Presbyterianism, as dividers of the nation in the generation leading to the Civil War. C. C. Goen has asserted that the churches were protagonists, not reactors in the issue, arguing that "The churches were critical agents in a reciprocal process of culminating alienation. In the onrushing tragedy it became evident that the Christian religion, a powerful cultural force in both sections, had been turned to the purposes of regional identity and defense, that equally earnest expositors could draw from the same scriptures diametrically opposite

[175] The doctrine of the Church's spirituality, taught by Southern churchmen James Henley Thornwell and Robert J. Breckinridge, in certain ways mirrored the "two kingdoms" theology of Martin Luther. See Yale ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr's, *Christ and Culture* New York: Harper & Row, 1951): 170-85.

[176] Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 36 (1864): 563; Charles Hodge, "The State of the Country," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 33 (1861): 1; Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 31 (1859): 617.

[177] Ernest Trice Thompson, *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961); John H. Leith, "James Henley Thornwell and the Shaping of the Reformed Tradition in the South" (Lancaster, S.C.: privately published, 1983); John H. Leith, "Spirituality of the Church," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, ed. by Samuel S. Hill and Charles Lippy, 2nd ed. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005): 759.

conclusions about the most distinctive feature of the southern way of life, and that the common faith that had once undergirded national unity had itself become an instrument of division."[178]

Southern Presbyterians who sought to keep the pulpit free from what were seen as "political deliverances" were therefore surprised when, on Thanksgiving Day 1860, the Rev. Benjamin Morgan Palmer of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, departed from what he called "the habit of a lifetime" and took the issues of slavery and secession to his pulpit, justifying this upon the basis of "the grave situation" that confronted his state.

Palmer, who had turned down an appointment to the faculty at Princeton Seminary, was a great orator and had not hesitated to express his love for the Union during the controversies of the 1850s. His ideas were bound to carry weight. Palmer advocated secession and, if necessary, resistance against the federal government "till the last man" had fallen. He welcomed war, if war was required "to preserve and transmit . . . [the] existing system of domestic servitude." To the South, the highest position is assigned, Palmer cried, "of defending, before all nations, the cause of all religion and all truth."[179]

Palmer's sermon was published and was immensely influential in rallying pro-secession forces in the South. P. H. Jenkins, headmaster of a school five miles northwest of Chulahoma, Mississippi, a Whig and an elder in the Chulahoma Presbyterian Church, wrote: "I agree with Dr. Palmer of N. Orleans in his magnificent eloquent sermon of the 29th. . . . I look upon it as one of the greatest documents of the times."[180]

The fact that so many influential citizens and church leaders by then agreed with Palmer's views no doubt muted criticisms of his action, which might have been registered even a few months before. Harvey W. Walter of Holly Springs (whose wife and children were active in the Presbyterian Church, had been the Whig candidate for governor of Mississippi in 1859. He was devoted to local interests in the principles he advocated and had urged a more moderate course with regard to secession than his Democratic opponent. But he carried only Bolivar, Panola, Tishomingo, and Warren Counties. His party affiliations and, presumably, his views on secession, were likely held by many Presbyterians in Mississippi, for as Bettersworth has said, "As an aristocratic church, it is reasonable to assume that the Presbyterian Church would be very likely to represent the attitude of those wealthy classes in Mississippi who had opposed secession from the beginning." This reserve would not last much longer.[181]

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[178] Walter Brownlow Posey, "Review of *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, Confederate Centennial Studies, Number Three, by James W. Silver" (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Co., 1957)," *Journal of Mississippi History* 19 (July 1957): 208; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 124; C. C. Goen, "Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Regional Religion and North-South Alienation in Antebellum America," *Church History* 52 (March 1983): 21-35; also, Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 2007); Samuel S. Hill Jr., *The South and the North in American Religion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

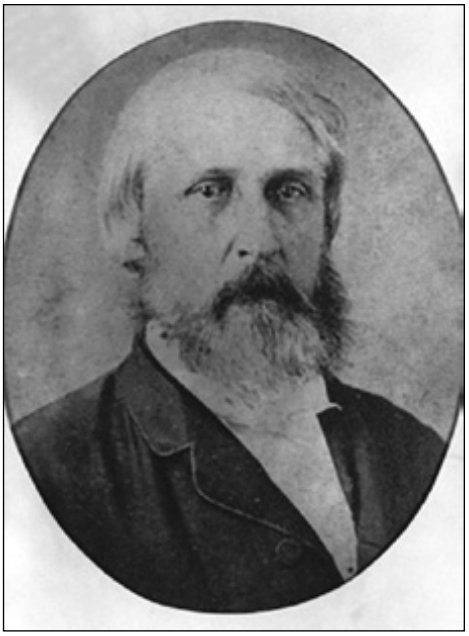
[179] See Margaret Burr DesChamps, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Orator-Preacher of the Confederacy," *Southern Speech Journal* 19:1 (1953): 14-22.

[180] B. M. Palmer, *Thanksgiving Sermon, November 29, 1860* (New Orleans: True Witness and Sentinel, 1860). See Haskell Monroe, "Benjamin Palmer's Thanksgiving Day Address," *Louisiana History* 4 (1963): 105-18; Wayne C. Eubank, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer's Thanksgiving Sermon, 1860," in Jeffery Auer, ed., *Antislavery and Disunion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963): 191-98; E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978): 111; Jack P. Maddex, "From Theocracy to Spirituality: The Southern Presbyterian Reversal on Church and State," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Winter 1976): 438-57; Paul L. Garber, "A Centennial Appraisal of James Henley Thornwell," in Stuart C. Henry, ed., *A Miscellany of American Christianity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963): 114-25; James O. Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986); Timothy F. Reilly, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Becomes Nationalist," *Louisiana History* 18 (Summer 1977): 287-301; P. H. Jenkins to Lottie V. Ingram, Holly Springs (December 28, 1860). Jenkins Letters, Marshall County Historical Museum.

[181] Rainwater, 100, 102; Jack Winton Gunn, "Mississippi in 1860 as Reflected in the Activities of the Governor's Office," *Journal of Mississippi History* 22 (July 1960): 101; "Mississippi Unionism," 38-39.

Breakdown of the Doctrine of the Church's Spirituality

War clouds had gathered after November 6, 1860, the day Abraham Lincoln was elected President—so much so that President Buchanan issued a proclamation making the first Sunday in January a day of fasting and prayer for peace. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina passed its ordinance of secession, to be followed on January 9, 1861 by Mississippi. On January 4, the Rev. Joseph B. Stratton of the First Presbyterian Church in Natchez preached his fast day sermon on Zechariah 11:14: "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." The national day of prayer seemed to do nothing to delay or prevent the looming conflict. Eliza Lucy Irion, a member of James A. Lyon's congregation in Columbus, was present for the fast day sermon in the Columbus Presbyterian Church. She noted a large congregation and "perfect attention," but her reaction was gloomy: "Oh, our glorious country is falling, falling. All-Wise, avert the evil which now seems inevitable."[182]



The Rev. James A. Lyon labored to ameliorate the evils of slavery. He was pastor of churches in Columbus and Oxford and taught in the University of Mississippi. The plan for a great Southern Presbyterian university was his long-held dream.
—Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat

The Republican victory in 1860 resulted in political discord across the nation. Fear of anarchy and of federal action to free the slaves caused many Southerners to change their opinions in favor of secession. The religious press also agitated the question. In February 1861, *The Southern Presbyterian*, predicted that it would be found ultimately, "desirable and proper" for a Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States to be organized independently of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The editor wrote that "It can never more be possible," for Southern Presbyterians "to be ecclesiastically one with the Northern part of the Church."[183]

Louisiana's Presbyterian historian Penrose St. Amant has asserted that, "At least in the field of church history, it is quite evident that slavery was a central issue in the Civil War. The sources are replete with this theme. Innumerable papers, pamphlets, and sermons reveal the intense preoccupation with slaves and slavery—the right to have slaves and to retain slavery. Nothing could be more evident than this. The Presbyterian press argued for secession on the eve of the war."[184] The charges are not new. The Rev. Robert Livingston Stanton of the Presbyterian Seminary at Danville, Kentucky, wrote in 1864 that, "Politicians, secular and religious journals, pamphleteers, men in all classes of society, freely lay the blame of this Rebellion, in great measure, or wholly, at the door of the church; charging the ministry . . . with having caused it." Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison had predicted in 1837 that the division of the Presbyterian General Assembly into Old and New Schools set a dark precedent. Said Garrison (a Congregationalist): "That mighty denomination is severed in twain at a blow. The political dismembership of our Union is ultimately to follow."[185]

Novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe blamed the continued existence of slavery on the Presbyterian Church. When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became popular as a play, abolitionists noted wryly that "the theater became antislavery before many churches did." After Lincoln's election, *The Presbyterian Herald* at Louisville, Kentucky, warned that "The

[182] See Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez*, 52; Diary of Eliza Lucy Irion (January 3-4, 1861). Mississippi Department of Archives and History, cited in Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 127.

[183] Citations in E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:561, 563.

[184] St. Amant, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Louisiana*, 75.

[185] Robert Livingston Stanton, *The Church and the Rebellion: A Consideration of the Rebellion against the Government of the United States: and the Agency of the Church, North and South* (New York: Derby & Miller, 1864): vi, 174; *Liberator* (July 28, 1837).

very worst omen of the times is the fact that the religious men of the country stand apart to so great an extent in this hour of trial. Most of the churches have split on the very rock upon which the State is foundering. In fact, their divisions have prepared the way and laid the [ecclesiastical] foundations for the political divisions which now exist."[186] After Lincoln's election, all but a few Mississippians (at least among those who spoke publicly), came to support secession. It was a dramatic change. Whigs and Democrats were elected to the Mississippi Secession Convention in January 1861 without regard to party affiliation, and members of Presbyterian churches throughout the state offered leadership to the secessionist cause. By February 23, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had joined the secession movement.[187]

Ecclesiastical Division Follows Civil Strife

Commissioners who established the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States in 1861 justified their action on the basis of a new country, but calls for a separate Southern Church preceded the secession of the Southern states. James W. Silver asserted in his *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* that, "Secession in the church was a natural prelude to secession in the state." He said that Southern clergy, as no other group, "were responsible for a state of mind which made secession possible." Donald G. Matthews has argued that the dissolution of the national identity of the churches institutionalized the moral disjunction of the United States. Church periodicals argued for secession during the winter of 1860-1861. On March 16, 1861, *The Southern Presbyterian* carried an editorial declaring that a new church, as well as a new nation for the South, would be both "desirable and proper." Shots were fired at Fort Sumter, April 12. By then the die was cast.[188]

When the Old School General Assembly met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 16, nine states had seceded, with two more to follow, and war had been underway for a month. Resolutions introduced by the Rev. Gardiner A. Spring of New York City calling all Presbyterians to support the federal government sundered the Assembly in twain. Southerners left, saying that the Assembly was calling them to commit treason against their newly constituted authority in the Confederate States of America. High oratory for days on end changed few minds. When the vote was finally taken, the deed was done. For a lack of leaders who could rise above local pressures, America was plunged into the darkest period of its national existence, a time when many saw a failure of leadership on the part of its ministers. Since the Presbyterian Church was the intellectual leader of the churches, it must bear responsibility. Indeed, as Jemar Tisby has remarked, "Even as white Southern Christians denounced northerners for making fidelity to the Union a requirement for fellowship, they made acceptance of race-based chattel slavery a requirement of biblical orthodoxy."[189]

The Rev. John N. Waddel brought down the gavel to convene the constituting Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America the following December in Augusta, Georgia, and was elected that body's first stated clerk. The Southern Assembly was composed of 840 ministers and 72,000 communicants. The Rev. Benjamin M. Palmer was chosen moderator and preached the opening sermon. An eloquent apology for the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, written by the Rev. James Henley Thornwell, of Columbia Theological Seminary, was adopted. It was titled, "An Address by the General Assembly to the Churches of Jesus Christ Throughout the Earth." With an eye to the Spring Resolutions, the address declared that "the provinces of Church

[186] Theodore R. Hovet, "The Church Diseased: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Attack on the Presbyterian Church," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 52 (1974): 172; Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 18151860* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978): 96; *Presbyterian Herald* 30 (November 1860): 2.

[187] Margaret Burr DesChamps, "Union or Division? South Atlantic Presbyterians and Southern Nationalism, 1820-1861," *Journal of Southern History* 20 (November 1954): 494-98; Rainwater, 207.

[188] Benjamin Morgan Palmer and W. T. Leacock, *The Rights of the South Defended in the Pulpit* (Mobile: Thompson, 1860); James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (New York: Norton, 1967); Chester F. Dunham, *The Attitude of the Northern Clergy toward the South 1860-65* (Toledo: Gray, 1942): 35; Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977): 159.

[189] Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 80-81.

and State are perfectly distinct," and that the one has "no right to usurp the jurisdiction of the other. . . ." It warned that "unless each is confined to its own track, the consequences may be . . . disastrous." The address concluded with a defense of slavery, stating that, "We venture to assert that if men had drawn their conclusions only from the Bible, it would no more have entered into any human head to denounce slavery as a sin, than to denounce monarchy, aristocracy or poverty."

The new Church, readers were assured, "held no distinct position on slavery: We are neither friends nor the foes of slavery . . . we have no commission either to propagate it or abolish it. . . . We have no right, as a Church, to enjoin it as a duty, or to condemn it as a sin." But in keeping with the famous Cornerstone Speech delivered by Confederate vice-president Alexander Stephens, March 21, 1861, in which Stephens, recasting the words of Christ concerning himself in Matthew 21:42, had said of slavery, "This stone which was rejected by the first builders 'is become the chief of the corner,' the real 'corner-stone' in our new edifice." The Confederate Presbyterian address concluded, that the Black race stood lower than the white on the scale of being, and this being so, as long as the Black race coexisted side by side with the white, "bondage is its normal condition."[190]

All reports of the 1861 Assembly stressed its prayerful spirit. But in spite of the early pronouncements on behalf of the Spirituality of the Church, late in the week, the Assembly spent half an hour in special prayer "for the blessing of God upon the cause of the Confederate States."[191]

The 1862 Assembly also expressed warm sentiments toward the Confederate cause, as its committee on the state of religion reported that Presbyterian congregations, "without exception," in the Southern states evinced "the most cordial sympathy with the people of the Confederate States," to maintain their rights against the despotic power that was attempting to crush them. The committee asserted further that it was convinced that "This struggle is not alone for civil rights, and property and home," but "religion, for the Church, for the gospel."[192]

The Mississippi presbyteries also crossed back and forth over the Confederate Assembly's "track" separating the provinces of church and state. Chickasaw Presbytery, meeting shortly after the General Assembly in Philadelphia had gotten underway, recommended on May 24, 1861, that "All our churches . . . observe Thursday evening of every week, as an evening for prayer in behalf of our beloved country, & those that have gone forth for its defense, during the present conflict." This was the first mention in the records of the presbytery of the civil strife that was gripping the nation and which had upset the very concept of patriotism and what it meant to pray for one's country. It was also the first mention of prayer for the nation since the presbytery was constituted in 1842.

Whereas the Confederate Presbyterian Church was formed upon objections against the intrusion of civil affairs into the deliberations of the governing bodies of the Church, most Mississippi Presbyterians were quick to embrace the Confederate cause, erasing the division between church and state they had emphasized in their protests against the 1861 Philadelphia Assembly. A flurry of resolutions followed. On April 10, 1862, North Mississippi Presbytery, meeting at Sardis, appointed an hour of the day, "to be spent in special prayer in behalf of the country." Two days later, in Tombeckbee Presbytery, "the second Saturday in May was set apart and recommended to our churches as a day of fasting and prayer in reference to the state of our country." On April 18, 1863, the Presbytery of North Mississippi, by the stated clerk's report, "spent some time in prayer, in behalf of our country in this season of her sore trials." and on October 1, 1864, Chickasaw Presbytery recommended "to the churches in all her bounds, to observe at 3 o'clock every Saturday afternoon, a time of special prayer for our country and our soldiers." On October 13, 1864, meeting at Brandon, the Synod of Mississippi, "spent the first half hour in prayer, with special reference to the state of our country."

Many Mississippi Presbyterians likewise upheld the Confederacy with vigor. Most approved the stand taken by Confederate leaders and entered into the prosecution of the war. They had believed for decades that slavery

[190] See W. A. Alexander, *A Digest of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. . . .* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1888): Section 611; and Robert Ellis Thompson, *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States*, Appendix XIX, 388-406.

[191] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCCSA, 1861); James A. Lyon, "The General Assembly at Augusta" *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15 (January 1862): 662.

[192] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCCSA, 1862), Appendix: "Narrative on the State of Religion."

was a divine institution, and as Ulrich B. Phillips has observed, "It was to be expected that they would support the last-ditch stand for their respective states in the separation from the union."[193]

Caught up in the excitement of the early days of the conflict, the Woodville Church donated its bell in response to a call by General P. G. T. Beauregard, to be made into implements of battle. Dr. Palmer of New Orleans, canvassing Mississippi at the request of the governor, declared that, "Our cause is preeminently the cause of God Himself." Spiritual interest waxed and waned during the war as movements of armies and the general excitement of the period distracted worshipers and prevented ministers and missionaries from carrying out their usual responsibilities, but presbytery narratives insisted that religious instruction of "colored people" was not neglected. Tombeckbee's narrative on April 19, 1861, stated that, "The children and servants continue to receive a share of attention and labour," and went further to say that,

> One feature to be noticed as characterizing the times is the organizing and sustaining the bounds of most of our churches, prayer meetings having special reference to the state of the country, to the government of these Confederate States, and in behalf of our Rulers and Armies.

Jane Wilborn, a Black citizen of Oxford, remembered how white women carried on a Sabbath school for African American children. The school met by turns in each of the white churches on Sunday afternoons.[194]

John K. Bettersworth has asserted that "The first two years of the war were in some respects a period of spiritual growth in the churches," but then, like everything else in the state, the church organizations were disrupted beginning in 1863. In Tombeckbee, October 3, 1862, the presbytery discussed an essay by the Rev. S. R. Frierson that asked, "Does the justice of a cause insure its success?" Many Southern clergy had come to believe that slavery was a divinely instituted relation and that it was given to the American South as a sacred trust; therefore, those who opposed it, as the abolitionists did, were taking a stand against the Bible's clear teaching and, having rejected God's decrees, represented "a spirit of atheism." On the other hand, there were those who opposed the war, daring to pray as Dr. James A. Lyon, "for the success of the army," without saying which one.[195]

In its narrative upon the state of religion, adopted April 6, 1865, Mississippi Presbytery reported that,

> One of our churches has been seized by the enemy and is used for the accommodation of their colored schools. Another has been closed in consequence of injury to the building by Federal troops. In some localities owing to the decrease of population, the congregations have been much diminished in size and the churches are barely kept alive. Many of our Sabbath schools are languishing for want of proper books and catechisms, and some for this and other causes have been disbanded. But little has been done during the last year for the instruction of the colored people; some of those who formerly held services for this class of our population, have been obliged from various causes to discontinue them."

In Columbus, James A. Lyon fumed of his Confederate neighbors, "Their sins, their violations of God's law but nothing else had brought the sword upon the land." He confided to his journal that "Two or three rabid men in the church, and two or three violent men out of the church, but directly or indirectly connected with the congregation, have been exceedingly outraged because I did not agree with them in their 'blood and thunder' politics, and preach and pray (on fast day occasions) to suit them."[196] Lyon's friend, the Rev. R. S. Gladney of Aberdeen, took a very different view. He identified the causes of the Union's downfall as its rejection of God's law in favor of the "self-evident truth" that "all men are created free and equal," and are entitled to "certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Such sentiments, said Gladney, betrayed their infidel origin

[193] Ulrich B. Phillips, *The Course of Southern Secession* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939): 85.

[194] Maude Morrow Brown, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford*, 10.

[195] Willard E. Wight, "The Churches and the Confederate Cause," *Civil War History* 6 (December 1960): 361-73; Bettersworth, "The Home Front," 52.

[196] "Mississippi Unionism," 46.

and displayed their legitimate fruits "in the demand for an antislavery Bible and an antislavery God." The Bible, on the other hand, Gladney asserted, "reveals relations of superiority, equality and inferiority, including those of husband and wife, parents and children, master and slaves." Gladney believed that slavery had accomplished more "in civilizing and Christianizing the heathens of Africa, than all the missionary efforts of Christendom have done for that people."[197]

The decline of personal morality, an inevitable concomitant of war, was lamented. The Rev. S. R. Frierson penned a mixed narrative of the state of religion in Tombeckbee Presbytery, April 6, 1865:

> During the ecclesiastical year now closing, our bounds have been preserved comparatively free from the invasion of the enemy. . . . While all report good attendance upon the public worship of God, and all the outward means of grace, in some of our churches, interesting Bible Classes, union prayer meetings in behalf of the country, besides the ordinary prayer meetings, are kept up regularly. There is much attention paid to the colored people and the instruction of children in Sabbath schools. But while we thus speak, we have to deplore the presence, and we fear, the growing prevalence of a spirit of gaiety, especially among the female members of some of our congregations. Card playing, for amusement, and its handmaid, promiscuous dancing, are turning, we are grieved to say, the heads & the hearts of some of the daughters of the slain of our people . . . .

Personal sins, not slavery, were to blame for the Church's predicament.

The Confederate sympathies of the presbytery were clear—"the enemy" were the army of the United States.[198] The congregation's one admission of neglect was in its responsibility to its Black and white neighbors. The presbytery made inquiry of all its churches as to what each was doing "on behalf of the colored people," and yearly, Hopewell's elders replied that: "There are yet a few colored people that are members of our church and attend the preaching service, yet most of them seem to prefer churches of their own color." They went on to say, "We do not feel that there are any spiritually destitute in our vicinity, all are in reach of some church and generally attend." It was an era of seeming religious conformity enviable in a later age. Hopewell Church reported 49 communicants that year.[199]

[197] R. S. Gladney, "The Downfall of the Union," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16 (July 1863): 43-51.

[198] See Mark A. Noll, "Theology, Presbyterian History, and the Civil War," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 89 (Spring/Summer 2011): 4-15.

[199] Robert Milton Winter, "History of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church," in *A Sixtieth Anniversary History of Camp Hopewell (1949-2009), with A History of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church* (Oxford: Presbytery of St. Andrew, 2010): 79. As late as 1901, the congregation reported four black members. The congregation's last black member was granted a letter of dismission in 1910 to Central Church, Oxford.

Work on the Foreign Field

In December 1861, in the midst of the civil commotion enveloping the country, the General Assembly of the Confederate Presbyterian Church had declared that the new body would be a missionary church. The first Southern Presbyterian mission was in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma, which was continued under the care of the Committee on Foreign Missions until 1889.

In 1888, the Rev. David C. Rankin, pastor of the Holly Springs Church, was called by the PCUS Assembly as Assistant Secretary of Foreign Missions, with offices in Nashville, Tennessee. Building on the work of his mentor, the Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, the venerable pioneer of Southern Presbyterian missions, a number of new fields were opened during Rankin's tenure. These included Cuba (1890), Congo (1891), and Korea (1892)—the latter two among the most significant and expansive missionary endeavors undertaken by American Presbyterians. Rankin edited *The Missionary*, a 40-page illustrated monthly, winning for it a foremost place among missionary journals in the English speaking world. In the first year of his editorship, circulation increased from two to 5,000. It eventually attained a circulation of over 12,000. Through the pages of *The Missionary*, Presbyterians learned the thrilling story of Samuel N. Lapsley and his black colleague William H. Sheppard in the Congo, as well as many other stories of courage and sacrificial commitment. Rankin also oversaw a pioneering effort in religious literature for young people—a monthly called *The Children's Missionary*, established in 1894. In 1901, he published the first detailed history of the PCUS's mission work, *Our Forty Years in the Foreign Field*. He later wrote a history of the church's Congo mission.[200]

The African American Presbyterian Church

Electricity came to Mississippi in the 1890s, and steps were taken to wire town churches for light. Meanwhile, populist Presbyterian presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan electrified the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago with his famous" Cross of Gold" speech. In cooler climes, a group of Presbyterians organized a summer haven called Montreat in the mountains of western North Carolina. Throughout this period, the South faced severe financial difficulties, and the strictures were reflected in church records as Chickasaw Presbytery declared itself on September 23, 1898, to be the "next to the poorest in the Southern Presbyterian Church." The era of Mississippi Presbyterianism's great wealth had ended. Moreover, a trend had begun, that would continue for 100 years, as members of small, rural congregations transferred their residence and worship to the larger towns and cities, searching for employment, or to have better schools for their children. In 1891, for example, Hopewell Church near Oxford dismissed 14 members to other churches but did not receive a single one. Such was the case in rural congregations across the region. Indeed, the country church's survival became a point of denominational concern.

Segregation was now the rule, in practice, if not by law. The back-room settlement of the contested presidential election of 1876 that awarded the White House to Rutherford B. Hayes and the Republicans had allowed white Democrats to determine, as they wished, the place of Blacks in the South. The Compromise of 1877, as it came to be called, ended the Republican crusade for Black equality and handed the fates of African Americans over to the South. By 1890, Mississippi had ratified a segregationist constitution, with several provisions—including a poll tax, literacy tests, and an "understanding" clause—all designed to prevent Blacks from voting.

Eight years later, the U. S. Supreme Court approved these provisions, opening the way for wholesale disenfranchisement of Mississippi Blacks, and not a few illiterate whites as well. Concern for the rights of African Americans largely ceased in state or national politics. There were no bills having to do with civil or voting rights

[200] See Robert Milton Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Rock*, 286-91.

introduced in Congress after 1891 until the 1940s. Isolated voices still spoke out on behalf of Blacks—a few from the Presbyterian Church—but these expressed paternalistic concern; they did not advocate social or religious equality.

A few Black people, most of them former slaves, quietly worshiped in the balconies of white-controlled Mississippi Presbyterian churches—some as late as World War I. Most Mississippi Presbyterians urged decent treatment for Black people but did not see "decent treatment" as anything like equality. Moreover, the Church did little to compel its members to take even such minimal measures, or to chastise those who did not, leaving Andrew E. Murray to remark that, "Though it has not greatly influenced Presbyterian theology or modes of worship, [the Church's Black constituency] has served as an irritant to the conscience of the Church, reminding it of the gap between its professions of Christian equality, and its acceptance of the system of caste."[201]

In 1873, the Synod of Mississippi had memorialized the PCUS General Assembly, reviewing the past actions of the Assembly regarding African Americans and their abandonment of the white-controlled churches. It proposed, as the only solution, the formation of an independent African American Presbyterian Church, to be aided and supported by the Assembly. It suggested that the Black congregations lying within the Assembly be organized into separate presbyteries, and these be then formed into a synod. When the Assembly convened its sessions at Columbus, Mississippi, this overture along with others resulted in a directive to form a completely independent African Presbyterian communion.[202]

Black Baptist and Methodist denominations that set to work in Mississippi after emancipation were essentially free of white control. But the movement to establish a credible Black Presbyterian witness—controlled by whites—unlike the Baptist and Methodist efforts, had faltered. By the 1870s, some believed that if Black Presbyterians were placed on their own, more might be achieved.[203] Little financial support from the white PCUS churches materialized. In 1875, only $320 was contributed for "Negro Evangelization"—PCUS-wide. A survey of the presbyteries that year revealed that over half the presbyteries were doing nothing at all to assist Black people in their midst. There were eight or ten African American Presbyterian candidates for the ministry, but none were receiving formal theological education. Stillman Institute for Colored Ministers in Tuscaloosa then consisted of but a single room, and six students, only two of whom were Presbyterians. The Rev. C. A. Stillman reported it was "no easy matter" to finance even this meager enterprise.[204]

In 1891, the Black churches in Mississippi and Louisiana were assigned to a separate African American presbytery, called Ethel, after its place of organization, Ethel, Louisiana. The single Black congregation in North Mississippi Presbytery was transferred on September 2, 1892, to Zion Presbytery, which corresponded to the boundary lines of the Synod of Memphis, to which North Mississippi Presbytery then belonged. The arrangement was not successful: on October 3, 1895, the Rev. Lucius Pool, who had been ordained by North Mississippi, appeared to give evidence that the Zion Presbytery to which North Mississippi had transferred him, "was virtually disorganized, with one member being removed out of its bounds, making it impossible to secure a quorum." Pool was again received into North Mississippi Presbytery.

In 1898, representatives of Black presbyteries met in New Orleans and, under white prodding, organized themselves into an independent synod, taking the name, Synod of the Colored Presbyterian Church of the United

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[201] *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 30.

[202] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1874): 517; the Synod of Mississippi's memorial to the Assembly was not recorded in the synod's minutes, but it was published in *The Southwestern Presbyterian* (November 6, 1873). By 1895, black membership in the PCUS had declined to only 70 congregations with about 700 members. On May 19, 1898, these were organized into the Synod of the Colored Presbyterian Church in the United States and Canada. The following year, it was assigned a more modestly conceived name, the Afro-American Presbyterian Synod. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*, 89.

[203] See William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African American Church in the South 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Katharine L. Dvorak, *An African American Exodus: The Segregation of the Southern Churches* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1991).

[204] Smith, *In His Image, But…,* 241-43.

States and Canada. The next year, the name was changed to the Afro-American Presbyterian Church. Some of the commissioners from the Ethel Presbytery dissented from this action and notified the PCUS Assembly. The Negro synod and presbyteries worked under difficult conditions with little encouragement from PCUS leadership. Ethel Presbytery maintained a small school at Vicksburg, named in honor of the Rev. J. H. Alexander of Kosciusko, a white minister who took leadership in the effort to form the African American presbytery. By 1901, the new church reported a total of 1,352 members—a minuscule total compared to the numbers attracted by the Black Baptist and Methodist denominations.[205]

Some white ministers among Mississippi Presbyterians assisted their African American fellow Presbyterians and others in the Black community. Often, their efforts did not inspire cooperation or emulation. Throughout this period, sessions were expected to report yearly to presbytery on a number of subjects, including (1) official fidelity on the part of ministers, elders, and deacons; (2) attendance upon the services of the sanctuary; (3) special outpourings of the Holy Spirit; (4) prevalence of intemperance, worldly amusements, and other forms of sin; (5) family worship; (6) catechetical instruction; (7) observance of the Sabbath; and (8) fidelity of God's people to worship him with their substance, etc. Always at the last of the report was a query concerning "the religious instruction of the colored people." In most years, the all-white sessions would acknowledge that, "Nothing has been done in this regard." On October 19, 1899, North Mississippi Presbytery took action to assist Black people within its bounds. Under the leadership of the Rev. T. W. Raymond, it organized a church at Waterford, Mississippi, called Greenfield, with 15 members and two elders, Green Jones and Isaac Peeler.

[205] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (November 21, 1890 and November 13, 1891); E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:325; *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 150-51. The Afro-American Synod did not prosper and was readmitted to the PCUS in 1917 as the Snedecor Memorial, after the Rev. James George Snedecor of Louisville, Mississippi, longtime secretary for colored work in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. In 1952, the segregated Snedecor Memorial Synod was dissolved, and Black congregations in Mississippi were placed under the care of formerly all-white presbyteries in which they were located. See Darius L. Swann and James F. Reese, "Perspectives on the Development of the Black Presbyterian Church in the South," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Spring/Summer 2007): 48-56; Bailey, "The Post-Civil War Racial Separations in Southern Protestantism," 455-73.

Part Two

Segregation and Early Calls for Civil Rights

As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, Presbyterianism in the South seemed intellectually spent. Southern Christians and Presbyterian theologians helped lay the intellectual framework for segregation, just as they had for slavery. They spoke with less certainty on behalf of segregation, but perhaps with more stubbornness. Their arguments made less frequent reference to scripture, seeking rather to defend "our Southern way of life." As historian Eugene Genovese wrote concerning Southern Presbyterians in the post-Reconstruction era, "Nothing is more disheartening, than to see such firmly orthodox Christians as [Robert Lewis] Dabney, who stood all his life on *sola scriptura* and turned to the Bible for guidance on every subject, [and as he defended segregation] plunge into arguments from sheer prejudice that hardly pretended to be scripturally based." Genovese remarked that, "The [pre-Civil War] proslavery divines may be criticized severely for their error, but they cannot fairly be accused of bad faith, much less hypocrisy, in their scriptural defense of slavery." He believed the same could not be said for their successors' efforts to defend postbellum segregation, charging, that "Many—perhaps a good majority—of the orthodox disgraced themselves in the rank hypocrisy of simultaneously touting their orthodoxy and abandoning their previous habit of close attention to scripture."[206]

Genovese observed that, There emerged "no vigorous post-[Civil] War defense of segregation [that] compared in biblical scholarship and intellectual power to the defense of slavery. The churches seem to have, without exegesis or reflection, capitulated to the attitudes and opinions of the wider society." With few exceptions, the Church retreated into a piety that emphasized the salvation of souls and decency in personal affairs but generally avoided the issues that increasingly divided most white Mississippians from large sections of their own country and the Western world.

Some saw a religious motive in defending segregation. A few tentatively argued that it was biblical, and just as defenders of Southern slavery had tagged abolitionists as atheists (because rejecting the Bible's apparent sanction for slavery amounted to the rejection of God), so also as the new century unfolded, defenders of segregation saw behind that movement the specter of atheistic communism, believing that communist agitators were behind African American dissatisfaction with racial separation and subordination.[5]

The post-war Church found its life in its preaching of the gospel and educational effort. The work of foreign missions flowered, and in the half century after the Civil War, a much greater proportion of the Southern population found membership in one or other of the various religious denominations. Presbyterians worked among the freed slaves, and while this service was not equal to what was just and due, some took this calling with great seriousness. The Church found new tasks that would take a century and more to unfold. Reconstruction in the South had ended with the withdrawal of federal troops in 1876 and the subsequent overthrow of the remaining Republican governments. Mississippi and other states in the Cotton South were left relatively free to develop

[206] Genovese, *A Consuming Fire*, 80, 93-95.

institutions of white supremacy. Accordingly, Mississippi disenfranchised Black voters. Other laws were quickly added to make the legal structure of segregation pervasive and complete.

Withdrawal of Federal Occupation Forces

Although not mentioned in the official records of the churches, the withdrawal of federal forces that had been quartered at various points around the state since the end of the Civil War marked the official end of Reconstruction for the state of Mississippi. Mississippi's five-year military reconstruction drew to a close in late 1869 as it was readmitted to the Union. This resulted in many changes within the state, and on February 23, 1870, the state was again granted representation in Congress. The Rev. Hiram Revels, earlier in life a Presbyterian minister, served in 1870-1871 as the state's first and only African American U. S. senator. Soon thereafter, white control of the state's political life was achieved.

After the Civil War, Blacks in Mississippi voted in substantial numbers, albeit with manipulation by the political authorities. As time passed, local whites employed various measures, some of them violent, to restrict African American participation at the polls. When such actions brought the threat of federal intervention, first Mississippi (1890), then South Carolina (1895), two states in which African Americans outnumbered whites, followed soon after by other Southern states, moved to disenfranchise African Americans by constitutional means.[207]

Mississippi's 1890 constitution was but the first in a series of such documents adopted across the South that sought to disenfranchise African Americans. The move to separate Black and white in rail and other forms of public transport had begun in 1887. Legal sanction was given to this and other segregation measures in 1896 by the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which upheld the principle of "equal but separate accommodations." Along with the legal effort to isolate Black voters politically came the effort to segregate African Americans socially. The PCUS, claiming its distinctive doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, remained silent as disenfranchisement of Black people proceeded, as segregation became first the practice and then the law across the states covered by the denomination, and as scholars have shown, segregation began first with the churches. As E. T. Thompson remarked, "Its silence gave consent, and such voices as appeared gave religious sanction to the legal enactments."[208]

All the church newspapers published by PCUS editors approved of segregation—some of them into the 1970s. *The Presbyterian Standard* and *The Southern Presbyterian*, however, believed that disqualifying causes—such as requirements that persons applying to vote interpret a portion of the state constitution or that yearly poll taxes be remitted—should be applied to Black and white alike. Still, the Church largely stood by, silently consenting as legislatures (with tacit federal approval) acted again and again to abrogate the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U. S. Constitution with respect to African American citizens. By the first decade of the 20th century, measures to disenfranchise Black citizens, as well as the wider system of social segregation, were largely in place, and would remain so for more than 50 years.[209]

Even the most progressive Southern Presbyterians believed Negroes to be inferior to whites as did most Americans of that day. The Rev. D. Clay Lilly, longtime secretary for Negro Work in the PCUS, asserted that "[The African American] is not the equal of the white man, either mentally or morally." The Rev. Egbert Watson Smith, the denomination's secretary for foreign missions, said, "The science of ethnology puts the white race at the top, the Black race at the bottom, of the five great divisions of mankind."[210]

This was true in both the civil as well as the ecclesiastical realms, for the churches were among the first Southern institutions to segregate by race. In accord with its doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, the General

[207] James P. Coleman, "The Mississippi Constitution 1890 and the Final Decade of the Nineteenth Century," in McLemore, *A History of Mississippi*, 2:3-28; see Herron, *Framing the Solid South*, 211, 223, 232.

[208] Ernest Trice Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem: A Sketch," *Austin Seminary Bulletin* 83 (1968): 6.

[209] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:352.

[210] Cited in E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:253.

Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church remained silent as civil racial disenfranchisement proceeded, and as Thompson explained,

> For 50 years after the Civil War, Southern Presbyterians shared the common conviction of their region that the Negroes were an inferior race, not to be trusted with the ballot, and that amalgamation of the races was to be avoided at all costs. Churchmen apparently had unlimited confidence in the good intentions of the white man to act for the best interests of the Black man and were strangely blind to the many injustices which developed. Segregation, disenfranchisement were accepted as the Southern and a fully Christian way of life.[211]

The Rev. Dunbar H. Ogden Jr. Recalled Racial Situations in Mississippi During His Childhood

The Rev. Dunbar H. Ogden Jr., a son of the manse in Columbus, hailed from a distinguished line of Mississippi Presbyterians. Remembered by many for his courage as he walked with a small group of African American children as they attempted to enroll in Little Rock's Central High School in September 1957, the first effort to integrate a public school in the South, Ogden was the great-grandson of pioneer settler and planter, David Hunt, the distinguished benefactor of Oakland College—a man who in his own time was said to have emancipated over 1,000 slaves. Dunbar Ogden's father, the Rev. Dunbar Hunt Ogden Sr., was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbus when his namesake son was born in 1902. The elder Ogden later served the First Church in Knoxville, the Central Church in Atlanta, the Second Church in Louisville, Government Street Church in Mobile, and Napoleon Avenue Church in New Orleans, during which time he was a leader in the effort to reunite the Southern and Northern branches of the Presbyterian Church.

Dunbar Ogden Jr. grew up making annual trips back to Mississippi to visit his grandmother and a cousin who still lived in Mississippi after his father moved to other places of service across the PCUS. Dunbar Ogden Jr.'s memories, recorded late in his life, describe his gradual realization that white treatment of African Americans involved great wrong and needed to be changed. The recollections excerpted below were given to his son, Dunbar H. Ogden III, by tape-recorded interview in 1977.[212]

Dunbar Ogden III wrote that, "My father's earliest memories were filled with Black people. . . . Black maids helped to manage the children on this annual train trek. . . . Mattie, 'a fat, genial Negro woman'. . . attended at all seven home births. Black servants were part of the Ogden household and the households of the grandparents. A yardman, coachman, cook, and two maids comprised the Columbus grandmother's staff.

"One of my earliest childhood memories," my father often repeated during my boyhood and later, 'is of a cane mill that must have been near Columbus.'. . . He said,

> I remember seeing Negroes bending and working, the same motion over and over, and I remember standing there beside a mule walking around and around treading the cane, tied to a post, his head down, just around and around that post, hour after hour. As I look back on it, I had an overwhelming sadness, a compassion for this mule. I wanted to stop it. To feed it. . . . To give it something to drink. Maybe in my mind those Negroes were like the mule. . . .[213]
>
> We boys played at the Tombigbee River. A white friend named Jim and I played with a Negro boy who lived on a plantation owned by Jim's father. Jim called the boy 'Snowball.' Jim's father had 'given' Snowball to Jim. It released the Negro boy from going out to hoe cotton. We were about eight. We went

[211] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:550-51.

[212] Dunbar H. Ogden Jr., *"My Father Said Yes:" A White Pastor in Little Rock School Integration* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008): 9.

[213] Ogden, "*My Father Said Yes*," 9-10.

swimming, and one of the things we did, we scuffled and tussled and tried to hold each other under water until one raises his hand. That means 'I give up.' . . . I had the feeling Jim would have won over us, but he would not. Jim would hold him under a long time. Jim was mean to him a lot of times. But he'd just take it, and laugh, or have a sort of noncommittal attitude. The main thing was, he didn't want trouble with Jim. He was Jim's 'nig--r.

Ogden wrote that,

> My father tried to say the last sentence in an even-toned, matter-of-fact way, as perhaps any local plantation owner would have said it. My father hated the word 'nig--r. A shock went through me when I heard him use it. Then I understood that he had said the sentence without putting stress on that word—as a liberal non-Southern civil rights propagandist might—because he wanted me to hear in his level-voiced, offhand manner the way in which this expression—and his story—illustrated an accepted way of life. If I grasped that in his telling, then I would grasp his outrage at the hideous treatment of people, made the more heinous in his view because nobody questioned it. While he was telling the story, he wanted me to experience his shock in awakening as a boy to this unprotected injustice.[214]

Remembering a visit to a cousin named Stanard Equen who lived on an 11,000-acre plantation near Minter City, Ogden recalled that,

> My younger sister Grace Augusta—a year younger than I—and Stanard's much younger half-sister, Virginia, came along. One afternoon we decided to go horseback riding. They had house servants too, and all you had to do was to say you wanted to go and you could go. There were these lanes between the ten-acre parcels, with narrow little stretches of woodlands, and it's so easy to get lost down there. . . . My sister and I thought we'd have a little fun with Virginia. We whipped up our horses to tease her and we lost her. We just thought, she'll follow. Well, she didn't. . . . I guess she didn't care. We lost her. We looked around but we couldn't find her. . . . When we rode up late that afternoon, Stanard was there, and Stanard says, 'Where's Virginia?' I said, 'Oh, she's back there somewhere.' He said, '*Where* is Virginia?' We said, 'She's coming along after a while, she'll be. . . .' He said, 'you mean you just rode off and left her? Do you know what kind of a place this is? You realize we live in a place where we've got just three white families here. We've got the storekeeper, and we have myself and we have the overseer. There are three white families on thousands of acres, and we've got hundreds of Nigras out there, and there are always some of those people you can't trust. There are some bad-acting nig---s out there.'

Ogden said, "Stanard really blew his stack: When somebody in the family went from 'Nigra' to 'nig--r,' you knew they were mad. They called Blacks 'Nigras,' a sort of genteel word, and so did my parents."[215] Equen called for his horse and rode away to find his sister. Ogden said that he did not know if his cousin's fear was justified. "In those days Black men wouldn't dare even raise their eyes in the presence of a white woman, for if they didn't have a completely humble attitude pretty much all the time in the presence of a white woman, they could lose their life for it."[216]

Ogden told of another visit to his cousin's plantation when he saw him threaten an African American sharecropper with a pistol because the man and his family had not chopped the cotton according to Equin's time schedule. The African American had been badly frightened as well as subjected to humiliation in front of his family.

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[214] Ogden, "*My Father Said Yes*," 11-12.
[215] Ogden, "*My Father Said Yes*," 14.
[216] Ogden, "*My Father Said Yes*," 13-15.

One morning . . . Stanard walked into the kitchen where his wife was giving me breakfast. 'I've been having a little trouble with Bill over there,' Stanard said, raising his chin toward the sharecroppers' cabins out beyond the plantation house. Just how many there were back then, I don't know. By the late 1940s, there were 120 cabins. Anyway, he said, 'I've got to go over there and see Bill. I've got to straighten that nig---r out. You want to come along' . . . And to my surprise he goes over to the closet and gets out this big holster and a rather large handgun and leather gun belt.

> 'I'm the one who knows how to do it,' he said. He grabbed the belt and slung it around his waist and buckled it up. . . . We went down to his Dodge. He flung the pistol onto the back seat, and we climbed in. We slammed down some dusty roads past cornfields and cotton fields. . . . Thirty yards off the road stood an unpainted board shanty. It may have had two or three rooms. Cousin Stanard pulled over. A Black woman was sitting on the steps of the porch fanning herself.
>
> 'Where's Bill?' shouted my cousin.
>
> 'You go tell him to get out here. And quick. Tell Bill to come out here.' A hardness hung in his voice. The Black woman struggled to her feet and disappeared into the house.
>
> Equin picked up the pistol and confronted the sharecropper. 'Why haven't you got on better with your cotton here? Why haven't you got your wife and children out there hoeing?' The sharecropper sputtered to assure Equin of his intention to complete the work. 'All right, Bill. We'll be back to check on you' Equin returned to the car, pitched the weapon into the back seat and pressed the gas pedal. 'I really straightened him out, didn't I?' said Stanard. 'I guess he knows I put the fear of God in him, all right.'[217]

Dunbar Ogden Jr.'s own sense of racial justice developed over time. He admitted to posing in 1920 for a mock lynching yearbook picture with his Davidson College classmates who hired an African American campus janitor to wear a noose, surrounded by menacing-looking students brandishing rifles and billy clubs.

Dunbar Ogden III asked, "At what moment had this event metamorphosed in my father's mind from a prank into guilty horror? At what point in his life did he come to realize he was participating in a way of life that he deplored. I do not know. As I review our interviews and what else I know of his life, I do not come across a lightning flash of recognition. What I do discover is that years later in Little Rock, all at once he did not have to stand there and just let it happen as it had in his boyhood days."[218]

Across the wider South and among some in its churches, there was gradual realization of the need for change, especially with regard to the treatment of African Americans. This was true across the nation, but because the South's churches were in the main, regional bodies, they addressed the matter as it could be addressed in the territory under their purview. The changes that occurred were not consistent in either time or place. The Border States were generally more open to efforts toward racial equality than was the Deep South, where outside pressure was resented. Calls for change from within were seen by many as betrayal.[219]

In Mississippi, improvements were advocated and made in public education, health care, more humane treatment of prisoners, schools for deaf and blind persons, hospitals for the mentally ill. Leasing of county prisoners to individuals was outlawed in 1906. E. T. Thompson observed that, "The viewpoint of the Church began to change after World War I, and the ensuing struggle, first for elementary justice and then for full civil rights" occupied much of the Presbyterian Church's attention in various ways for generations to come. Among members of the PCUS, these struggles were most difficult in the Synod of Mississippi and in its Presbytery of Central Mississippi.[220]

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[217] Ogden, "*My Father Said Yes*," 16-17.

[218] Ogden, "*My Father Said Yes*," 18-19.

[219] William Alexander Mabry, "Disenfranchisement of the Negro in Mississippi," *Journal of Southern History* 4 (1938): 318-33.

[220] E. T. Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem," 26; Mabry, 318-33.

A Lynching Averted

Lynching, which in the 19th century had been confined mostly to the Western frontier, became increasingly common in the South. By the 1890s, most of the annual average of 154 recorded lynchings were occurring below the Mason-Dixon Line—many were reported in Mississippi. Indeed, lynching continued under other forms and for different reasons well into the civil rights era. There were cases of lynching involving both white and Black victims. Editors of papers such as *The Southern Presbyterian* and *The Southwestern Presbyterian*, published where lynching was more prevalent, engaged in feeble attempts to explain the atrocity, though without defending it. The Rev. R. Q. Mallard, editor of the latter paper, called lynching "a damnable blot on our civilization and an ominous menace to civil liberty."[221]

Longtime Mississippi Presbyterian pastor, the Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger, recorded the story of a lynch mob during his childhood at Collins, where he was reared, and of the swift action of his father, Milton Uriah Mounger, a local attorney, to diffuse the situation. According to *The New York Times*, the incident occurred in 1913.[222]

By Mounger's account,

> I was only a small child, but I will never forget that night of the arrest. We were getting ready to go to bed when there was a knock at the door of the house. When my father opened the door the messenger said, 'There is a crowd of mad men at the jail. Sheriff Warren says they want Seymour Arnold, and they want to lynch him. The sheriff wants you to come right now down there to help him.' My father went to the shelf of his bedroom closet and got his pistol and went with the sheriff's deputy to the jail in the hollow, the home of dead Will Lowry whom the jailed man had killed. We children and my mother, you may be sure, were frightened and anxious.
>
> Milton Mounger could hear the disturbance as he approached the jail. Men were shouting, 'Sheriff, open up the jail, we want that damn nig--r! He broke into the house and killed Will Lowry. We want justice and we want it now.'
>
> The sheriff said to them, 'My duty is to find and arrest those who are accused and see that they have a fair trial. You can be sure that justice will be done. I can't let you have him.' The enraged mob shouted back, 'Open up and let us have Seymour Arnold right now or we will go in and get him ourselves. He showed no mercy to Will Lowry and deserves none now.'
>
> Arnold was a black man who had allegedly broken into the Lowry home just across from the courthouse. The black man was said to have shot and killed the white man.
>
> My father tried to reason with the mob, and those people knew he was serious. When lawyer Mounger stepped up beside Sheriff Warren standing between the mob and the jail he spoke to the gathering in a quiet voice: 'This is no way to get justice for Will Lowry. You have no right to take the law into your hands. Seymour Arnold, even though he is black, has a right to a fair trial before a judge and jury in a court of law.' But the men shouted, 'Seymour Arnold doesn't deserve any mercy. He killed Will Lowry. Damn it, we want him, and we want him now.' Mounger continued to speak to them in a low, firm voice. 'Sheriff Warren and I assure you that he will be brought to a court of justice here. We have never had a lynching in Covington County and we don't want one now. Go on home now and wait and let the law take its course.'
>
> Seymour Arnold did have his day in court. A jury found him guilty of murder, and he was sentenced to death by hanging. On the day of the execution, as was common in those times, thousands came by buggy, wagon, horseback, and train to witness hanging, which was conducted publicly as a spectacle on a wooden gallows specially erected for the occasion.

Though the trial was, of course, by an all-white jury with the event cloaked in the racism of the time, Milton Uriah Mounger's action that night prevented a tragic breach of his community's law and order. Dwyn Milton

[221] *Southwestern Presbyterian* (June 29, 1899): 1 E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:254.

[222] *New York Times* (December 31, 1913).

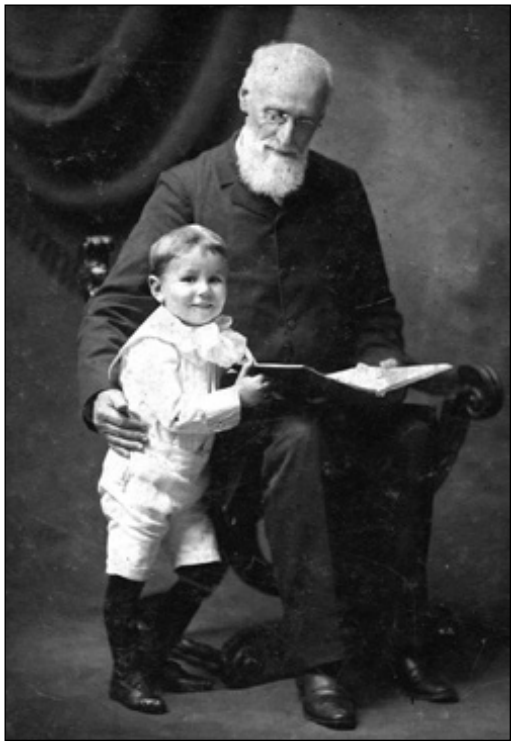
Mounger and his brothers begged to see the lynching, but their father emphatically refused. Mounger later wrote that this taught him that, "Life even for the humblest is sacred, and that the taking of life is not a matter of holiday entertainment." Mounger did later see a lynch mob in Hattiesburg in 1923.[223]

The incidents left their impression on Dwyn Mounger, who as a minister later acted as voluntary counsel and defender at the trial of an African American man at Forest, who had been accused in a similar situation. His great-uncle, Marshall Cook, a candidate for elected office, had been assassinated in Jasper County in the late 19th century because of his commitment to address an African American audience.[224]

Not only was lynching a blot on Mississippi, but the proliferation of violence with firearms also came under scrutiny, as on October 28, 1909, the Presbytery of Central Mississippi resolved, "That this Presbytery views, with alarm, the growing spirit of lawless violence in our State which so often manifests itself in the taking of human life. We earnestly recommend that our members use their Christian influence in cultivating and promoting a spirit of obedience to the sixth commandment, and to the banishing of those weapons made alone for taking human life, and which have become the instruments of such violence."

"The Triumph of Racism, Enforced by Law, Sanctioned by Religion, Supported by Custom"

Though a few freed slaves continued to worship in the white churches as late as World War I, Presbyterians in Mississippi worshiped as Christians segregated by race and, as time passed, came to think of the arrangement as having existed from time immemorial. E. T. Thompson observed that, "The triumph of racism, enforced by law, sanctioned by religion, supported by custom, and, if needed, by social ostracism, was complete. It extended to churches, schools, housing, jobs, eating, drinking; eventually to all forms of public transportation, sports, recreations, hospitals, orphanages, prisons and asylums, funeral homes, morgues, and cemeteries. It did not apply to certain areas where Negro inferiority was distinctly recognized but had particular force where there was any intimation of 'social equality.'" Not surprisingly, work by white Mississippi Presbyterians among their African American neighbors reached a low ebb during this period.[225]



The Rev. J. N. Craig of Holly Springs argued for a black minister's right to cast his vote in presbytery.
—Holly Springs Presbyterian Church

The following excerpt from the minutes of Chickasaw Presbytery, April 13, 1905, illustrates the position of many Mississippi Presbyterians:

> There are insuperable obstacles in the prosecution of this work, owing to the suspicious feelings towards the colored people & towards those who try to help them. This feeling does not arise from any skepticism regarding the immortal nature of these colored people; neither does it arise from any lack in their welfare, but arises from the natural racial prejudice, in the fear of social equality. These obstacles should be removed as far as possible by demonstrating to the white

[223] Dwyn Milton Mounger, Statement before the Presbytery of Mississippi (April 22, 1994): 1.

[224] Dwyn Milton Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century: Lest We Forget," written before his death in 1998 and edited by Betty Ann Mounger Hays (unpublished typescript, 2007-2009): 9-10; Dwyn Milton Mounger, Statement before the Presbytery of Mississippi, 1.

[225] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:251-52; cf. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999); Ed R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

people that the Church wants only the spiritual wellbeing of the blacks & would resist anything further as strenuously as the most dominant politician. That we should send money to Africa, & neglect the same people right at our doors, is a most glaring inconsistency.

Meridian Presbytery urged on April 15, 1908, that

> Ethel Presbytery covering most of Mississippi has three ministers and at least six churches in the bounds of our presbytery. Many of our people do not know this, and some are surprised to learn of the existence of Negro Presbyterian churches. Fifteen of our churches have contributed the total amount of $174 to this cause. This is equal to only one-ninth the amount given for Foreign Mission work. We would recommend that our ministers and elders be urged to give our people systematic information as to the purposes, needs, and success of this work in whatever way they deem most helpful.

Indeed, the Synod of Mississippi acknowledged in 1910, concerning its work among African Americans that, "It is true that many of our ministers and churches, by reason of their geographical position, lying in the 'Black Belt,' have been more or less hampered, because of race prejudice."[226]

The attention shown to African Americans by white Presbyterians was paternalistic and depreciated their character and abilities, judging such persons by their race, rather than as individuals. For example, on September 15, 1899, the Presbytery of Mississippi heard that, "We are as a Presbytery in full sympathy with the desire and efforts of our Church to evangelize the colored race in our Southland." It observed that,

> The colored people constitute an important element of our social and political life, for whose social, intellectual, and spiritual improvement we should most earnestly labor and pray. He [*sic*] has his peculiar characteristics, both social and moral. He is weak intellectually and morally and has vices peculiarly his own. But he has an immortal soul and that soul needs saving; and his proximity to the people of the South, the large majority residing in the Southern states lays a very heavy responsibility on the white Christians to do all in their power to give these religious instructions and lead them to the blessed Savior who alone can save our sinful race.

Thus, white Mississippi Presbyterians committed themselves to work as hard to disabuse whites of any thought that the Church advocated social equality with Blacks as that they wished to carry the gospel message to African Americans across the South. Because no such difficulty existed in justifying African missions, due to the far remove of the "Dark Continent," a great deal more money was raised for that purpose. This caused some local embarrassment. On April 5, 1904, the Presbytery of Mississippi considered a booklet containing a sermon preached by the Rev. A. B. Curry, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis, on behalf of colored evangelization, entitled "The Poor Man at the Gate" and again, when the same presbytery urged on October 11, 1906, "That our people be kindly reminded of the urgent need of giving such advice and counsel to the needy race as they may find opportunity to do, and where practicable to gather them into Sabbath Schools for religious instruction." The Synod of Mississippi resolved that, "The success of our mission to the inhabitants of Darkest Africa is a reproach to our civilization and the influence of our Christian example, if it might not be greatly exceeded in our efforts among the Negroes of our home-land."[227]

[226] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (November 16, 1910).

[227] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (November 16, 1910).

The Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church

African American slaves had early worshiped in the churches of their white masters—a fact that was gradually dismissed forgotten across the South. Prior to the Civil War, the denomination's Black members had largely been drawn from the ranks of slaves—house servants and carriage drivers who accompanied their owners to church services—the field hands and common laborers remaining on the plantations to worship under the leadership of Black preachers. There were also a handful of free African American members, particularly in the Natchez area. After the war, the Negro members who remained in the PCUS were older, the remnant of the Black population that remained for various reasons among their former owners. Later, African American worshipers who were attracted to Presbyterianism were part of that small group in the African American community that constituted its educated class—teachers and professionals who desired an educated minister and who disapproved of emotionalism in pulpit appeals.

Although almost all African Americans left white-controlled Baptist and Methodist churches after the Civil War, and in the years following the Civil War, either by voluntary choice or by encouragement or direction from the white leaders (as was also the case in several Mississippi Presbyterian congregations), a few Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Episcopal churches retained at least some of their African American members. These persons, of course, occupied a subordinate place, sitting in galleries or in other assigned places. By 1890, the Presbyterian Church, U. S., had only a handful of African American members (98% of the denomination's membership was white).[228]

Whereas some PCUS congregations sought to retain their Black members—in some cases because it was thought they would be easier to control if what they heard from the pulpit was regulated by a white session—Cumberland Presbyterians early settled on a plan of racial separation, organizing a freestanding denomination for their former African American members. A principal motivating factor for organizing one was that as the move toward segregation gathered momentum in the wider society, the presence of the occasional Black minister or elder in the governing bodies became problematic. Cumberland Presbyterians took their action in 1869 (made permanent in 1874). The separation, not accompanied with financial support, created the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church (later renamed the Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and still later, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America).[229]

PCUS leaders wavered for a generation on the question of a separate African American synod. In 1891, most African American churches in Mississippi and Louisiana were assigned to a separate African American Presbytery, called Ethel, after its place of organization at Ethel, Louisiana. In 1898, representatives of several African American presbyteries met in New Orleans and, under white prodding, organized themselves into an independent synod, taking the name, Synod of the Colored Presbyterian Church of the United States and Canada. The next year, the name was changed to the African American Presbyterian Church.[230]

Stillman College Continued as PCUS Assembly's School for African Americans

Continuing to emphasize the need for an educated ministry, the chief PCUS effort on behalf of its black members was an institute for African American ministers at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The Rev. D. Clay Lilly headed the school following founder, the Rev. C. A. Stillman's resignation, also serving the Tuscaloosa Church as pastor. Stillman College was always starved for funds, and although they commended its work, the Mississippi

[228] *Presbyterian Missions in the Southern United States*, 194-216; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:81-95.

[229] Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 152-56; *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, 167-69, 570; Thomas D. Campbell, *One Family Under God: A Story of Cumberland Presbyterians in Black and White* (Memphis, Tenn. and Huntsville, Ala.: Federated Board of Christian Education of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1982).

[230] Darius L. Swann and James F. Reese, "Perspectives on the Development of the Black Presbyterian Church in the South," 48-56.

presbyteries did little toward its aid in the early years. In 1901, the school advertised that it had room for a hundred students and noted that a student in the theological department could be admitted for tuition of but $20.00 for the eight-month term. In reality, Stillman was a small operation, with 10 students in the academic department and 12 in the theological department.

The African American synod and presbyteries worked under difficult conditions with little encouragement from the white PCUS leadership. In addition to Stillman, there were a few other schools sponsored by Presbyterians for African Americans. In Holly Springs, former Confederate senator J. W. C. Watson and local newspaper editor Kinloch Falconer, in 1866, began a school for the freed children of slaves. Later, a small school for African Americans was maintained for some years at Vicksburg, named in honor of the Rev. J. H. Alexander of Kosciusko, a white minister, prominent in local efforts on behalf of education, as well as area Presbyterian work on behalf of African Americans. The school's longtime superintendent was the Rev. E. W. Benjamin, a Negro minister who labored almost alone for the Presbyterian cause among African Americans in the region. Classes were taught by African American pastors of other denominations in the community in connection with their regular church work.

The existence of a separate African American Presbyterian Church did not preclude work by whites in the PCUS on behalf of African Americans through the channels of the various PCUS governing bodies and congregations, or from working directly with African American ministers and congregations in particular situations, and indeed, unlike the segregated presbyteries in the Carolinas, the segregated Presbytery of Ethel was allowed to retain its organic connection with the PCUS.[231]

Two Black congregations in North Mississippi remained outside the African American synod. One, Fairview Church, south of Olive Branch, had been assigned to a Black presbytery called Zion, centered in west Tennessee and North Mississippi that failed for lack of membership. Another, named Greenfield, had been organized in 1898 by North Mississippi Presbytery, which had several members committed to work among the large African American population that lived among the rural white Presbyterians in the area.

In 1900, North Mississippi Presbytery examined the Rev. C. B. Scott, a graduate of Stillman Institute, to serve Fairview Church. In spite of the growing tendency toward segregation and denial of all courtesy titles, the presbytery's clerk wrote of Scott by the title "Mr."[232] He wrote that he was examined "touching his personal piety and motives for seeking the gospel ministry and was received under the care of Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry. Presbytery then proceeded to examine the brother on Theology, Church History, the Sacraments and Church History." After preaching a sermon as part of his trial, he was licensed as a minister. The reference to Scott as a brother was not incidental. While he was clearly treated in a patronizing way, it meant that he was accepted, not only as a fellow Christian, but as a fellow worker in the ministry.[233]

As late as December 9, 1904, the Rev. John W. Hilton, a member of Ethel Presbytery, was invited to sit as a corresponding member in the sessions of North Mississippi Presbytery, a privilege that was similarly extended to white PCUS ministers visiting from other locales. (Ministers of other communions—Methodist, Baptist, Cumberland Presbyterian, and Episcopal—who visited presbytery meetings but were not Presbyterian, were invited to sit as "visiting brothers," a distinction being made in the polities represented. Presbyterians only were seated as corresponding members. On October 27, 1907, North Mississippi Presbytery heard Elder Green Jones, a member of the Greenfield Church, in regard to the work of that congregation. A collection was taken for that work amounting to $8.85.

But the segregation of African Americans proceeded inexorably. An African American congregation and its pastor, the Rev. Harvey Chisholm, had remained in the membership of the East Mississippi Presbytery. The presbytery endorsed his appeal to raise money for a church building to house his small flock of worshipers, after which it transferred him to the care of Ethel Presbytery. A collection of $10.43 was raised.[234] The paternalism of

[231] See E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:89.

[232] Black ministers were also accorded the honorific, "the Reverend."

[233] Minutes of North Mississippi Presbytery (October 5, 6, 1900; April 3, 1901).

[234] Minutes of East Mississippi Presbytery (April 14, 1908, April 29, 1909).

this arrangement was perhaps intended by the white-controlled presbytery as a kindness, but it was humiliating to the African Americans who received it. Though seated and heard in the early years (as long as their numbers were few), the African American ministers and elders were expected to show proper deference and were not treated as equals.

The First Presbyterian Church of Oxford operated a mission school for African Americans in the 1920s, taught by white members of the congregation and one of the few congregations in the area to carry on any work with its African American community. This work could be done precisely because no hint of social equality was accorded the African Americans who participated.[235]

In the 1960s, after congregations such as Greenfield were placed in the segregated Ethel Presbytery (later called the Presbytery of Louisiana-Mississippi), there would be fierce controversy in St. Andrew and the other Mississippi PCUS presbyteries over accepting these small African American congregations after the segregated presbyteries were dissolved, with few if any of the white leaders recalling that some of them had been members of the old white governing bodies in former times, albeit under a different arrangement. Indeed, the principal source of controversy in the 1950s and '60s, as all clearly understood, was that the new arrangement implied social as well as spiritual equality among all parties.

PCUS efforts for "colored evangelization" were remarkably unsuccessful, and efforts to provide education and training for industrial work only slightly more so. The Rev. D. Clay Lilly went from Stillman Institute to serve as PCUS Secretary for Colored Evangelization. There he also oversaw two small industrial colleges for Negroes that struggled in the Carolinas. He did sacrificial work, but suffering from strain and frustration, due to difficulties in operating the schools as well as white opposition to the work, he resigned in 1903 and was succeeded by the Rev. James G. Snedecor, a native of Louisville, Mississippi. A graduate of the University of Mississippi, Snedecor devoted himself to building up a Presbyterian ministry among the South's African American population, serving nine years as secretary of the Assembly's Committee on Colored Evangel-ization.[236]

White opposition played its role in keeping the success of Presbyterian work among African Americans small, certain missionaries who labored among African Americans were resented by whites in the Southern communities where they served. Not infrequently, they were forced to leave, and if this feeling was displayed toward missionaries of the PCUS, the feeling against workers of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was even more pronounced. By any standard, PCUS racial-ethnic work was stinted. This report to the 1901 Synod of Mississippi illustrated the situation:

> Your committee submits which is practically an empty report on a barren field. Not because the field does not offer ample opportunity and give promise of abundant results for faithful labor wisely expended, but because lack of popular interest and lack of men and money constitute a well-nigh insuperable barrier to anything like successful work in this field. So far as your committee is advised, little or nothing has been done during the past year by us as Presbyterians in the bounds of this Synod.

Most white Mississippi Presbyterians were simply not inclined to do much for their near Black neighbors. Sometimes they pleaded their own poverty, but amounts collected for foreign missions, including the work in Africa, was impressive. The synod urged pastors to visit their African American Presbyterian colleagues, "who are often quite isolated, ecclesiastically, at least."[237]

In 1902, only $6,500 was contributed for racial-ethnic work across the entire PCUS. Only two congregations had contributed as much as $100, and only four presbyteries gave more than $200. Dr. Snedecor reported that he found many hindrances to his effort. He noted that most African Americans had found their way into Black-controlled Methodist or Baptist denominations. Moreover, when workers trained by the PCUS attempted work in neighborhoods where African American Methodist and Baptists had already established themselves, jealousies

[235] Brown, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford*, 24.

[236] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:325; *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 150-51; Bailey, 453-73.

[237] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (November 22, 1901).

arose, prompting Snedecor to speak of "the fierce opposition of . . . ignorant and envious preachers." Whites also exerted opposition. For example, at a location called Street, Mississippi, Snedecor reported that work among the Black population was prospering under the care of the Rev. L. L. Wells, when "men of evil mind, known as 'white cappers' ran Wells out of the community and dispersed his congregation by threats of bodily harm." The white cappers were members of the "poor class of whites," and acted out of fear and resentment because Wells was perceived to have "made some pretensions to respectability."[238]

The independent African American Synod never prospered. As E. T. Thompson remarked, "There [was] no indication that the Negroes themselves had ever really desired it." The PCUS gave little financial help yet asserted control. As years passed, it became increasingly difficult to obtain quorums at the African American Synod's annual meetings. Finally, in 1915, the Executive Committee on Home Missions proposed to revitalize the synod by having it once again become part of the PCUS Assembly. The reorganized synod was named for Dr. Snedecor, in honor of the great man who had so passionately spoken about the Southern Presbyterian responsibility for work among African Americans in their region. In 1918, there were 1,492 members—140 more than reported in 1901. There were 1,847 in 1933—considerably fewer than the Presbyterian churches in the South had claimed before the Civil War. In 1927, the average remuneration of a Black pastor in the Snedecor Synod was $50 per month, of which about $40 came from the PCUS executive committee. Only in rare cases was there a manse.[239]

Treatment of Black ministers and elders also discouraged the success of evangelization efforts. African American commissioners attended the General Assembly but were subjected to disparagements of various kinds. Though they could participate fully in the debates and vote, they were required to sit together in a pew toward the front of the church. They ate apart from the white commissioners and were housed separately. At Montreat, African American commissioners to the General Assembly were fed in the kitchen, where they ate with the Black employees. (A similar situation prevailed in the dining rooms of the U. S. Congress.) Some charged that the weight of the small Black constituency's votes caused certain measures to pass in the Assembly that would otherwise have been defeated. A resentful white correspondent wrote, that "Our church is confronted with a menace in this humiliating fact that these vital questions . . . should not be settled by the deliberate and mature white thought, but [by] the immature, and volatile black thought."[240]

Although a few African American ministers were members of predominately white presbyteries, their attendance was sporadic. The inability of their congregations to pay their travel expenses (as required by *The Book of Church Order* for all commissioners attending meetings of the church courts), as well as the lack of suitable accommodations in the usually all-white host congregations, doubtless discouraged African American participation. Most Black PCUS ministers had to support themselves by farming, teaching, or some other secular occupation.[241]

Mississippi Governor James K. Vardaman, who held office from 1904 to 1908, campaigned against schooling for African Americans. He argued that, in the South millions had been spent for Negro education, but no results could be seen. He said, "When I speak of educating the people, I mean white people." "The Negro is necessary in the economy of the world, but he was designed for a burden bearer." Not to be misunderstood, Vardaman said in 1904, after vetoing a bill that would have sustained the tiny State Normal School for Negro teachers at Holly Springs, that, "literary education—the knowledge of books—does not seem to provide any good results with the Negro, but serves rather to sharpen his cunning, breeds hope that cannot be gratified, creates an inclination to avoid honest labor, promotes indolence, and leads in turn to crime." Vardaman called for repeal of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the U. S. Constitution, which extended equal protection of the law and voting rights to African Americans, citing his belief in "the profound, God-stamped, time-fixed and unalterable incompetence of the Negro for citizenship in a white man's country." The little school at Holly Springs soon closed, leaving only

[238] J. G. Snedecor, Report of the Secretary of the Executive Committee of Colored Evangelization, 1906.

[239] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:88-89.

[240] *Central Presbyterian* (June 19, 1907); *Presbyterian Standard* (November 6, 1929): 8; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:86, 260.

[241] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:87.

a makeshift teacher education program for African Americans at the state-supported Alcorn College, as well as small efforts under private auspices at Rust College in Holly Springs and Tougaloo College near Jackson. Thus, as Charles C. Bolton has written, "Many black teachers prior to 1945 . . . entered the classroom with little or no college education."[242]

Despite Vardaman's efforts, legislators were unwilling to withdraw all funds for the education of Blacks, but amounts provided were a pittance compared to what was appropriated for whites. Since most African American children lived in rural areas and attended one-room schools, they suffered more from lack of education than whites in towns who could be grouped together in graded schools. Philanthropic groups, dedicated individuals, as well as certain Presbyterian churches made what efforts they could to help. Despite these efforts, E. T. Thompson declared PCUS efforts on behalf of African Americans "a failure."[243]

Extreme poverty characterized the existence of African American Presbyterians in Mississippi, and white Presbyterians, while zealous for foreign missions, did not take special pains to help the African American poor in their midst. The commissioners comprising the Central Mississippi Presbytery's Committee on Colored Evangelization issued this critique on April 9, 1909:

> We report no special change in the condition of colored work since the last spring meeting of Presbytery. We have but one colored minister laboring in the bounds of our Presbytery, Rev. J. D. Moates, who is represented in minutes of General Assembly as stated supply of the five churches in our bounds. These five churches have about 70 members. Some of these churches have an existence only in name and many of these members are only nominal. These churches raised last year for all causes $38. Nothing was raised for colored evangelization by these churches. The Presbytery of Ethel raised in its 25 churches $800 for all causes. Three churches raised $3 for colored evangelization. The average salary of the ministers is $40.00 a year. . . . There are about 400 members. In our own presbytery with 25 ministers, raised $136 for colored evangelization. We have about 5,000 members and raised $3,500 for foreign missions. Let these facts preach their own sermon.

In truth, Black Presbyterian ministers found themselves discriminated against by fellow white Presbyterians and were often criticized by Black members of other denominations, who perhaps were affronted by the fact that African American PCUS congregations submitted to governmental direction by whites, whereas black Methodists and Baptists were entirely self-governing.

At least some Presbyterians took a different stance. Many white Mississippians were outraged when President Theodore Roosevelt entertained Booker T. Washington at a White House dinner, conveying the idea of social equality, as well as his appointment of a Black woman postmaster for the town of Indianola. Four years later, the Rev. John L. Yandell, pastor at Holly Springs, a North Carolina native, when planning his service of installation, extended recognition of the religious equality of Black and white under the lordship of Christ. He invited the Rev. John W. Hilton, a member of the African American Presbytery of Ethel, who served Fairview Presbyterian Church, in eastern DeSoto County, to sit as a member of his installation commission. As the first minister of the Holly Springs Church born after the Civil War, Yandell (like his predecessors in Holly Springs) was active in work on behalf of African Americans, as when President Theodore Roosevelt entertained Booker T. Washington at a White House dinner, conveying the idea of social equality, as well as his appointment of a Black woman postmaster for the town of Indianola.

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[242] Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005): 31.

[243] Nannie Pitts McLemore, "The Progressive Era," in McLemore, 2:34, 37; Westley F. Busbee, *Mississippi: A History* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2005): 199; Robert L. Jenkins, "The Development of Black Higher Education in Mississippi, 1865-1920," *Journal of Mississippi History* 45 (November 1983): 272-86; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:86.

C. W. Grafton's Tribute to "Brother Benjamin"

Most in the PCUS were thoroughly convinced of the superiority of their theological system. This conviction led them to do mission work among African Americans in their region, believing that it was Calvinism that would uplift that race's position. A report on "Colored Evangelization" printed in the minutes of the Synod of Mississippi, November 24, 1905, declared that, "We have heard . . . with pain . . . of the startling indifference of so many of our people to work among these helpless wards. . . ." Yet, members of the synod realized that Blacks who adhered to Presbyterianism would be set apart from the mass of the Negro population. Some Presbyterians sensed the inequity of their position, but the Rev. C. W. Grafton, longtime pastor of the Presbyterian congregation at Union Church, summed the feelings and attitudes of many in his era on the matter with this anecdote:

> Traveling up the I. C. road on one occasion to attend a meeting of the Synod of Mississippi, we found our friend Benjamin of the Alexander Memorial Church at Vicksburg. [The Rev. E. W. Benjamin also directed the Alexander Memorial Institute in that city.] He was on his way to attend a meeting of the Synod of Mississippi where he would be sure to get a back seat. Brother Benjamin was conspicuous by his loneliness. He was in the coach with the colored people and all around him were members of a colored conference that were going to attend their big meeting; and they were good naturedly poking fun at Benjamin. They were backed up by their numbers. We were sorry for Brother Benjamin there alone. But he had something in him that those other black folks did not have. He had a clear conception of the plan of grace as set forth in the Shorter Catechism.[244]

African American Missionaries Interested Mississippi Presbyterians

The Foreign Missions movement reached its zenith during the early decades of the 20th century, with contributions to this cause often forming the largest benevolent expenditure by congregations and presbyteries. Concerns were both spiritual and practical. The steamer *Lapsley*, which had plied the Congo River in Africa, furthering the missionary work in that colony, had sunk, a calamity that seriously threatened the progress of PCUS work there. Still, on March 31, 1904, North Mississippi Presbytery rejoiced that, "Already a movement is being contemplated, and in fact, has been inaugurated, which we hope will result in building and equipping a much larger boat, and one more adequate for the work of our mission." Children contributed their pennies that were used toward the purchase of the boat. In 1917, the Presbytery of Central Mississippi commended three books for study by its people: *The Lure of Africa* by Francis L. Patton, for mixed classes of men and women, as well as young people; *An African Trail*, by Jean K. MacKenzie, for classes composed exclusively of women, and *African Adventures*, also by MacKenzie, for children.[245]

All were interested in the work of the Rev. William H. Sheppard, a graduate of Stillman, who with the Rev. Samuel N. Lapsley, laid the foundation for the PCUS mission in the Congo. After a year of service up and down the Congo River, Lapsley, who was reared near Selma, Alabama, was stricken with fever and died, leaving Sheppard for a time to carry on the work alone. It was the highest responsibility to be carried by an African American in the PCUS up to that time.[246]

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[244] Allen Cabaniss, *Life and Thought of a Country Preacher*, with a foreword by William Warren Sweet (Richmond: John Knox, 1942): 567-68.

[245] See photo in James H. Smylie, *American Presbyterians: A Pictorial History*, *Journal of Presbyterian History* 63:1-2 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1985): 172.

[246] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:90, 123.

The African mission was established at a time when Southern Blacks were being disenfranchised politically, and when segregation was being extended into every area of Southern life, including the churches. The PCUS mission to Africa, in contrast, was biracial from the outset. Every member, regardless of race, had an equal voice in the affairs of the mission, and Blacks and whites received equal pay for the same work. The PCUS took special, if paternalistic, pride in the fact that it was the first American communion "to give the gospel to Africa by means of its own people."[247]

Presbyterian missionaries confronted many problems on the foreign field, including the opium trade in China and the exploitation of Congo natives by King Leopold II of Belgium. World attention was drawn to the situation in the Congo by the Rev. William M. Morrison and the Rev. William H. Sheppard, PCUS missionaries to the Congo Free State. The Congo Free State, as the Belgian colony was named, had been organized for commercial purposes, as well as "to seek the moral and material regeneration of the Congo natives." Belgian pledges concerning humane treatment of the Congolese people were disregarded. Morrison wrote many articles in church and secular magazines protesting atrocities, citing evidence uncovered by Sheppard. The 1900 General Assembly adopted resolutions approving the steps taken by the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions to bring the attention of the king of Belgium and other civil authorities to the situation existing in the Congo. Public sentiment was aroused in both Belgium and the United States and had its beneficial effect. The Belgian parliament removed the colony from Leopold's personal control, and in spite of lawsuits filed against the two missionaries, they prevailed in their cause. Mississippi Presbyterians followed the trial in 1909, at which charges against the missionaries were dropped. After Leopold's death, his nephew Albert succeeded to the throne, and many reforms were put into effect. The Congo Mission came to be regarded as one of the most successful in Africa. Morrison reduced the Baluba language to writing and published a dictionary, grammars, school textbooks, and translations of the Bible.[248] The foregoing bore witness to the odd disparity among Mississippi Presbyterians between work done on behalf of ethnic groups in faraway places and those nearer to home, for the Church seemed to have a strong predilection toward foreign missions, at least where non-white ethnicities were concerned. Concern for African Americans was delegated to the presbyteries' colored evangelization committees, but no parallel call was issued for employment of full-time workers in that field.

The 1920 PCUS Assembly stressed work with "the Negroes within our bounds." African Americans composed the majority of Mississippi's population, outnumbering whites by about 100,000, but their numbers were declining as the great migration of Southern African Americans to Northern cities was beginning. Mississippi and Georgia were the only two states with larger African American populations than white. There were between 2,500 and 2,700 African American members in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., out of a denominational total of 376,000.

There were even fewer African American Presbyterians in Mississippi than in other parts of the PCUS. During this decade when Blacks began to migrate to Northern cities, there were only four African American churches in North Mississippi related to the PCUS—all in rural Marshall County. Only two had a membership of 50. Two or three others were located farther south in the Central and Meridian Presbyteries. The decade ended with six African American congregations reporting a membership of 122.

In 1915, Central Mississippi Presbytery noted that only two of its white pastors, the Rev. C. T. Thomson of Kosciusko and the Rev. J. B. Hutton of the First Church in Jackson reported "negro [*sic*] Sunday Schools under their care." These congregations were members of the Presbytery of Ethel, which also included African American congregations in Louisiana. A few small African American Presbyterian congregations in Mississippi were under the care of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.[249]

[247] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:124.

[248] Stanley Shaloff, *The American Presbyterian Congo Mission: A Study in Conflict, 1890–1921* (Richmond: John Knox, 1970); E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:130-35.

[249] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 20, 1915); Busbee, *Mississippi: A History*, 211; Minutes of East Mississippi Presbytery (April 14, 1920).

White Presbyterian Women Reached Out to African American Persons in Their Midst

White Presbyterian women reached out to economically underprivileged African American persons in their midst. Encouraged by Mrs. Hallie Paxon Winsborough, the General Assembly's secretary for Presbyterian women, the synods held a series of Colored Women's Conferences. The first was held at Stillman beginning in 1916 and were said to be the first conferences of this kind in the South. All the synodical organizations of the PCUS were invited to send representatives to the conference. Mrs. Winsborough was anxious for each state to hold a conference of its own. She asked that the Mississippi Synodical send a representative to assist with the conference at Stillman in 1925. Mrs. Myrtle Graham Hicks, dean of students at Mississippi Synodical College in Holly Springs and synodical secretary for Assembly Home Missions, attended. The next year, Mrs. Hattie Stewart McLaurin of Canton, president of the Mississippi Women's Synodical, attended. The two saw the importance of the new work, and the synodical's board voted to hold a Christian Conference for Negro Women in Mississippi in June 1927.[250]

Arrangements were made to hold the conference at Jackson College (now Jackson State University), a historically African American institution in the state's capital city. Forty delegates attended the first conference, with Mrs. McLaurin as director and Mrs. Hicks as registrar. Mrs. W. W. Epperson of Jackson was assistant registrar, also meeting trains and busses to bring conference participants to the campus. Mrs. Jane Alsworth McBride, a Bible teacher from French Camp, conducted the vesper services. The faculty was composed of both African American and white persons. The program included Bible study, health talks, demonstrations of practical subjects, handcrafts, recreational activities, as well as devotional periods including morning watch and vesper services. In October 1927, Hicks was elected synodical president and, by virtue of her office, headed the second Negro Women's Conference. The faculty for the second conference included Mrs. Gussie Truesdale, Mrs. Lettie Young, Mrs. Ivy Graham Hill, Mrs. M. E. Miller, and Mrs. McBride. Other speakers were Mrs. McLaurin, Mrs. T. B. Talbot, Mrs. J. B. Hutton, Professor and Mrs. B. B. Dansby, the Rev. Wade C. Smith, and Mr. F. C. Wilcoxon.

A wide diversity of subjects was addressed through the years. For example, in 1931, when 34 delegates were enrolled, Mrs. Hutton led a study of the Epistle of James, Miss Mary Emily Lamar held a class in Sunday school and Vacation Bible School methods, Mrs. McLaurin, Mrs. R. E. Hough, Mrs. J. Morgan Stevens, Mrs. A. T. Watkins, Mrs. J. A. Lauderdale, Mrs. C. C. Alford, and Mrs. W. A. Hall led discussions on parliamentary procedure, organizational strategies, and poster making. The women would undertake a project—sewing or handicraft—which could be completed in the course of the week, making it possible to exhibit the finished assignments to the encouragement and pride of the participants. The Revs. R. D. Bedinger and J. B. Hutton gave devotional talks. Mrs. M. E. Miller continued her home economics classes for the next ten years. Mrs. Miller led afternoon classes with lessons and demonstrations in hygiene and sanitation, cooking, sewing, canning, serving, and home decorating.

Others contributing leadership were Mrs. R. H. Maffett, registrar for many years, Mrs. J. K. McDowell, publicity chairman, Mrs. J. L. Lovelace, Mrs. L. E. Napier, Mrs. T. M. Lemly, Mrs. A. F. Watkins, Mrs. Jack Tackett, Miss Louise Bisland, Mrs. Minnie Blaylock, Miss Nell Caldwell, Mrs. J. A. Lauderdale, Miss Annie Tait Jenkins, Mrs. J. M. Stevens, and Mrs. J. M. Gibert. The Mississippi State Board of Health also furnished speakers for each day. All memorized a verse of scripture each day.

The conferences were entirely self-supporting and were so successful that it was decided to make them annual events. Although not conducted on the basis of social equality, for the time and place, the events were remarkable in many ways as they provided one of the few occasions when African American and white women could meet together and discuss mutual problems. The conferences continued to be held on the Jackson State College campus until 1963, many of them under the direction of Buff Meek (Mrs. George) Love of Leland. Women's groups

[250] Julie Durway, "The Field is Endless: Hallie Paxon Winsborough and Inter-Racial Work in the PCUS Women's Auxiliary, 1912-1940," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (Fall 2000): 207-20.

from other denominations assisted the effort, contributing in many ways. Attendance grew until a peak of 100 was reached in 1939. The conference attendees also served, sewing dresses for African American girls at the Mississippi School for the Deaf.[251]

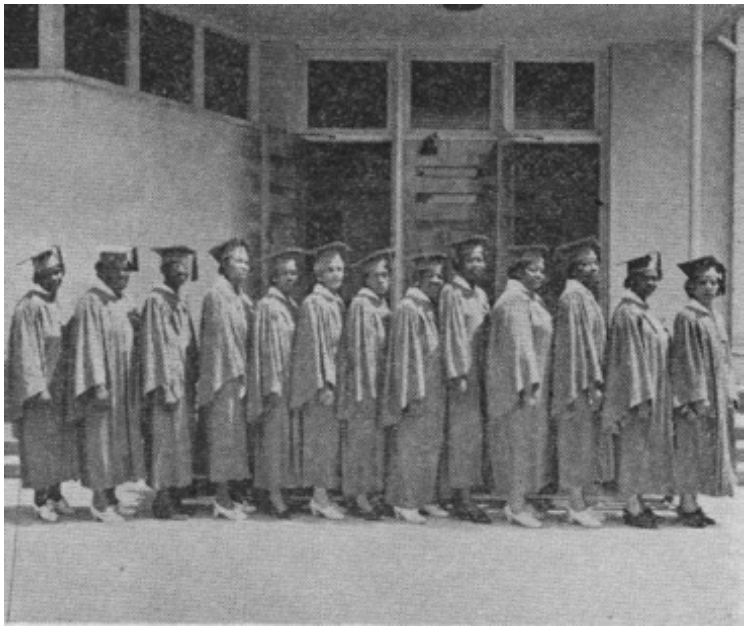
—photo from Buff Meek Love.

1939 faculty, Colored Women's Conference.

As time progressed, teenaged African Americans were invited to participate, and in 1945, formal graduation ceremonies were instituted for them, with the young recipients of certificates outfitted in caps and gowns. African American women also assumed greater responsibility in leadership roles in the annual conferences. The women returned home to put skills into practice that they had learned at the conferences. Reports from 1945 showed that more than 3,000 children participated in Vacation Bible Schools conducted in African American neighborhoods by women who had received training at the Jackson conferences. When written accounts were prepared, these women were addressed by white correspondents with appropriate courtesy titles.[252]

[251] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:95; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (September 19, 1929); see Mrs. Frank W. [Mary Ellen] Alexander, "Annual Report of the Women of the Church," Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 5, 1973): 55-58; Love, *A History of the Annual Christian Conference of Negro Women of the Synod of Mississippi*, 7-15.

[252] Buff Meek Love, *The Consummation of a God-Given Vision: A History of the Annual Christian Conference of Negro Women of the Synod of Mississippi, 1927–1946* (privately published, undated); 16-36.



1945 Graduates, Synod Colored Women's Conference.—p. 126.

Civil rights historian Carolyn Renée Dupont noted that, "Black Mississippians appeared in evangelical literature not as equal Gospel co-laborers, but as 'mission fields' in need of white guidance, benevolence, and support." But the Women's Auxiliary of the PCUS was more active than the male-controlled courts and agencies of the Church in speaking out against racism in Southern society. In 1924, for example, Mrs. Winsborough, in her capacity as executive secretary of the Woman's Auxiliary, addressed a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of Churches, which indicted the Ku Klux Klan, which, she said, "under the guise of patriotism, was sowing seeds of race hatred, lawlessness, and anarchy."[253]

African Americans still composed the majority of Mississippi's population, outnumbering whites by about 100,000, but their numbers were declining as the great migration of Southern Black people, including Mississippians, to Northern cities was under way. Mississippi had relatively few Black Presbyterians. Denomination-wide, there were in 1920, 33 African American PCUS ministers, and about 2,700 communicants.

Mary Holmes College Served African American Young People

In the decades following the Civil War, educational outreach to African Americans—freed slaves and their descendants—was a chief mission concern of the PCUS, the U.S.A. Church, and the United Presbyterian Church in North America. The PCUS Synods of Alabama and Mississippi directed most of their concern toward Stillman Institute, though Mississippians also encouraged the small Alexander Institute for African Americans at Vicksburg.

This outreach sometimes created tension between the PCUS and the two sister denominations (largely based outside the South), but the greater share of work was clearly assumed by the U.S.A. Church and the U.P.C.N.A. In the century following the Civil War, the U.S.A. Church operated 78 schools in the South and Southwest for African Americans, while the U.P.C.N.A. undertook work in 12.[254]

The U.S.A. Church took responsibility for a small school at West Point called Mary Holmes College. It began in Jackson as a secondary school in 1892 and was operated by the Board of Missions for Freedmen of the

[253] Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*: *Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2013): 31, 34; *Christian Observer* (January 2, 1924): 15.

[254] *Presbyterian Panorama*, 235, 240; Inez Moore Parker, *The Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1865-1970* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977): 281-87.

Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. It was named for two women—Mrs. Mary Holmes, the wife of the Rev. Mead Holmes, of Rockford, Illinois, who for many years served with the Board of Missions for Freedmen, and Dr. Mary E. Holmes, who worked at the Monticello School in Arkansas.[255]

The initial program began with primary, elementary, and high school work for girls, with Dr. Edgar F. Johnston as the school's first executive. After this property was destroyed by fire on January 30, 1895, the school moved to West Point two years later, with the Rev. H. N. Payne as president and Mrs. H. N. Payne as principal.[256] The little school was besieged with problems. First, there was an epidemic of yellow fever. Then, two years later, on March 6, 1899, the property was again destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt the next year, but in 1902, the school had 19 cases of smallpox. Dr. Payne was so ill he could do little beyond conducting a half-hour chapel service each day.[257] Still, the program went forward, and a domestic science building was erected in 1913 and a music building in 1922. In 1932, the school became coeducational and a junior college department was added, with the specific objective of educating teachers for the state's segregated African American elementary schools. An extension program began two years later to provide in-service training for African American persons already at work in the teaching profession.[258] The school burned a third time, February 7, 1939, as the main building was destroyed by fire, but it was immediately rebuilt. The next year, the Mary Holmes high school department was recognized as one of only four accredited high schools in Mississippi available to African American youth. In 1941, the school was renamed Mary Homes Junior College.[259]

Mary Holmes College

One of the most important ministries of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. in Mississippi was carried on at Mary Holmes College in West Point. Following World War II, 250 veterans were enrolled in a trade school, established to offer training in auto mechanics, radio services, and carpentry, all of which were approved through the Veterans' Administration. A high school department closed in 1959, and the school became a two-year college specializing in liberal arts, career studies, and science. In 1970, it was one of four racial-ethnic educational centers under the direct sponsorship of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The school's faculty and students took a prominent role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s occasioning significant disdain for the school among the conservative white community.

Resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan

As Michael Newton, a scholar of the Ku Klux Klan, has written, "Historians today almost unanimously recognize the Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction as an insurgent terrorist movement whose propaganda was wholly without merit." The Klan waged war on schools where African American children were taught, burning down many buildings in the 1870s, harassing teachers, and uprooting Black tenants and their Jewish landlords who had obtained land from white farmers through foreclosure. Klan activity receded somewhat after end of Republican rule in Mississippi. The 1890 constitution enshrined racial discrimination in law, and by 1910, most aspects of Southern apartheid were in place. Lynchings were a blot on the state, and vigilante groups formed and disbanded as situations presented themselves. The rule of law had yet to become firmly established in many parts of the state.[260]

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[255] Inez Moore Parker, *Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians,* 281-82.

[256] Inez Moore Parker, *Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians*, 282-283.

[257] Inez Moore Parker, *Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians*, 283-84.

[258] Inez Moore Parker, *Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians*, 284-85.

[259] Inez Moore Parker, *Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians*, 285-86.

[260] David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965); Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Thomas R. Pegram *One Hundred Per Cent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku*

The so-called populist movement that played a large part in both national and Mississippi politics was accompanied by renewed calls for white supremacy and the explicit subordination of Blacks—a phenomenon that could be seen in the sensational reception given across the country to D. W. Griffith's 1915 motion picture, *The Birth of a Nation.* The film, which portrayed heroic Klansmen lynching bestial Black rapists, premiered to sold-out crowds in Los Angeles. President Wilson viewed the film in the White House.

A new incarnation of the Klan, the so-called Second Klan, coalesced during and after the First World War—this one unlike the first—carrying great strength outside the South, as well as within. John M. Barry has remarked that the Klan embodied a form of populism, noting that, "American populism has always been a complex phenomenon . . . an 'us' against a 'them.' The 'them' has often included not only an enemy above but also an enemy below." In the Klan's case, the enemy below included Catholics, immigrants, Blacks, Jews, and perceived political radicals.[261]

Mississippi's Theodore Bilbo eagerly joined the Klan, and in 1919 told *The Jackson Daily News*, "This is strictly a white man's country . . . and any dream on the part of the negro [*sic*] race to share social and political equality will be shattered in the end." Bilbo maintained such views to the end of his life.[262] Politicians in the state sought and received the endorsement of the Klan. Bound by secret oaths and clad in masks, the knights of darkness filed white-robed into churches to receive the benediction of pastors, claiming as they did to be the upholders of traditional Protestant morality, especially the purity of women and the sanctity of the home. Their opposition to immigrants, be they Jewish or Catholic, seemed to meld in some ways with the fears of many Christians, and if they did not endorse the violence, many followers of Christ believed that African American inferiority and racial segregation were essential to maintaining their way of life. Partly from Klan pressure, in 1914 and 1916, the Mississippi legislature considered two anti-Catholic measures: one proposed to ban white teachers from Black schools, which would have forced the church to close its mission schools for African American children; the second envisioned a convent inspection law.[263]

During the 1920s, the Klan commanded immense influence in many corners of America, often holding rallies in church buildings. Differentiating itself from earlier times as the "Moral Klan," it seized on issues such as Prohibition enforcement as a justification for its activities. As Barry has written, "The Klan of the 1920s represented something frightening in America—frightening because it ran so close to the mainstream. Across the country, lawyers, doctors, and ministers—successful men, ambitious men, middle class men—supported the Klan." Barry trenchantly observed that "The Klan's target was change." A nation uprooted by war desired more than anything else, those things summed up in President Warren G. Harding's campaign slogan that he rode to the White House, "a return to normalcy." Women, too, joined the Klan, and at the peak of the organization's power in 1928, paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.[264]

Michael Newton stated that two or three Mississippi Presbyterian ministers in counties along the Mississippi River joined the Klan in the early 1920s, though he did not record their names. Newton reported that some were supportive, others critical, as in Warren County, where one of the two Presbyterian ministers serving there refused to join the Klan, while the other joined the organization. In a study of Protestant churches and the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi during the 1920s, Laura Lipsey Bradley quoted deacon Sam Neill of the Indianola Presbyterian Church, who told the kleagle who approached him, "When I put on a nightshirt you can be sure I am going to bed and not downtown."[265]

Klux Klan in the 1920s (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011); Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The Ku Klux Klan's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).

[261] John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997): 154.

[262] See Theodore G. Bilbo, *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization* (Poplarville: Dream House, 1947).

[263] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 213-14.

[264] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 213-14.

[265] Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland & Co., 2010): 43-101; Laura Lipsey Bradley, "Protestant Churches and the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi During the 1920s" (unpublished M.A. thesis,

Chiefly through its endorsement of Prohibition, the Klan found what would later be termed "wedge issues," so that it could veil its prejudices with biblical teachings and regular church attendance, and thus either silence or gain support from evangelical churches. A few Presbyterians spoke out. The Rev. John Moffatt Mecklin, son of the Rev. A. H. Mecklin, longtime minister at French Camp, after brief service in the pastorate, taught at Lafayette College, the University of Pittsburgh, and Dartmouth College. He wrote an influential history and exposé of the night riders, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in the American Mind* (1924). However, the records of PCUS governing bodies within the state are silent about the activities of the Klan in the state. The silence is telling, for in this period the Presbyterian Church found many evils to condemn. Indeed, the silence of the church courts in Mississippi on matters of race was a signal of the increasing marginalization of the state's white-controlled churches.[266]

Along with the quieter, less obvious evils of African American disenfranchisement and enforced segregation, as well as discrimination against women, American Presbyterians faced the horrors of Ku Klux Klan and lynching—forms of domestic terrorism that were especially prevalent in the South. In her 1894 autobiography, Ida B. Wells, an African American journalist and crusader against lynching, and a native of Holly Springs, charged that, "American Christians are too busy saving the souls of white Christians from burning in hell-fire to save the lives of Black ones from present burning in fires kindled by white Christians." Such feelings jaundiced many African Americans against the sincerity of white interest in their spiritual welfare and brought criticism when fellow Blacks cooperated with white church leaders or accepted financial help from them. Still, as historian of religion in Mississippi, Randy J. Sparks has observed, "At a time when race relations were at a nadir and when lynchings reached record numbers, [white] paternalism, flawed as it was, provided practically the only white criticism and resistance to the worsening racial climate."[267]

A few Mississippi political leaders spoke against lynching—a form of vigilante violence to which both Black and white victims were subjected. By various estimates, there were between 476 and 591 lynchings in Mississippi in the period 1882-1951. Mississippi leaders insisted the matter be dealt with by state (not federal) legislation, and at least one influential Mississippi PCUS minister wrote in 1940 to say that the U.S.A. Church's support for a federal anti-lynch law was a reason for opposition to reunion with that body. The PCUS Executive Committee on Home Missions asked in 1923, "Is it not a mockery to send missionaries to Africa and burn Negroes in America?" The Assembly had spoken in 1899, and in 1946, the Synod of Georgia expressed "shame and horror" at the mob murder of four African Americans in that state. But the governing bodies of Mississippi Presbyterians did not specifically condemn lynching.[268] One of the state's most prominent ministers, the Rev. J. B. Hutton, of Jackson's First Church, for the sake of states' rights, could not bring himself to support a federal anti-lynching law.[269]

Lynchings were a particularly violent form of terrorist activity. Large crowds gathered to witness the event, treating the occasion as a spectacle. The murders were usually carried out by hanging, although some victims were

University of Mississippi, 1962): 55-59, 68-71.

[266] John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in the American Mind* (New Kingston, N.Y.: Home Farm Books, reprinted 2008).

[267] Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, ed. by Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 154-55; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 166.

[268] Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); Annual Report of the Executive Committee on Home Missions, PCUS (1923): 17; Julius E. Thompson, *Lynchings in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Stewart Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); W. A. Gamble, "Union with the Northern Presbyterian Church Would Spell Doom for Our Church and Its Ideals," *Mississippi Visitor* 28 (May 1940): 1, 11.

[269] In 1940, *The Mississippi Visitor*, official newspaper of the synod, listed support of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. for a federal anti-lynching law as a reason to vote against reunion of the PCUS with the sister body. See W. A. Gamble, "Union with the Northern Presbyterian Church Would Spell Doom for Our Church and Its Ideals," *Mississippi Visitor* 28 (May 1940): 1, 11.

burned alive—the remains displayed for all to see. Bodies were often gruesomely dismembered, and the fingers and other body parts were taken by the executioners as souvenirs. Although lynching still occurred in many parts of the nation during this period, its meaning had taken on a racial and sectional aspect, since the majority of victims were African American. Critics noted that the mobs that carried out lynchings showed flagrant disregard for established authority—either intimidating or outnumbering local authorities. In many cases, the legal authorities gave tacit, if not outright, approval to what was done.[270]

Abraham Lincoln was one of many who were disturbed by lynchings in Mississippi. In a speech before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois on January 27, 1837, he spoke of them as "most dangerous in example and revolting to humanity." According to *The Negro Yearbook* (1952), Mississippi had had more recorded lynchings, according to statistics kept since 1882, than any other state. As early as 1925, it was said that twice as many people had met death by mob violence in the state as had been blown up with the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor at the outset of the Spanish-American War. According to a 1926 publication entitled *Mississippi and the Mob*, by the Mississippi Bar Association, the figure for Mississippi lynchings was four times that of the American victims killed when the British liner *Lusitania* was sunk by a German U-Boat in World War I. In the 19th century, persons of all races were lynched, but as time passed, most of the victims were Black. The prevalence of lynchings in Mississippi was a source of condemnation and disdain across the nation and the civilized world, but which occasioned remarkably little notice from religious leaders of the state, including the governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church, U. S.[271]

In early times, lynchings were sometimes justified by the lack of penitentiaries or jails sufficiently strong to imprison notorious persons. When the Rev. Joseph Holt Ingraham traveled through Mississippi in 1835, he said that the building of a state prison would "at once do away with this custom." There was relatively little public action against lynching by Mississippians of the antebellum period. One writer charged that opinion in Mississippi "unanimously sustained the conduct of the citizens of Vicksburg," where civil authorities had made no attempt to investigate hangings that took place there in 1835.

During the Civil War, when many Mississippi communities were without adequate law enforcement, vigilance committees sprang up. Their actions were directed chiefly against those who sympathized with the federal union, as well as slaves accused of plotting insurrection. [272]

Unsettled conditions during and following the war gave rise to a greater toleration for lawlessness of many kinds, and lynchings occurred with great frequency throughout Mississippi for a 30-year period during and after Reconstruction. Indeed, the Rev. Dwyn Mecklin Mounger, who carried out research on lynching in the state, remarked that, "During that time instances of mob violence…increased to the point of being commonplace." Among the actions punished by lynching were "insulting a white woman," "stealing hogs," and "participating in politics." The Ku Klux Klan carried out a number of lynchings in the period from 1866 to 1871. The Klan not only lynched African American men, it also victimized Black women and children and robbed and murdered Jewish merchants. Several whites, accused of stealing horses, were executed by mobs in the eastern part of the state in 1866.[273]

After restoration of Democratic Party rule, lynchings continued in many parts of the state. For decades

[270] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 4.

[271] Abraham Lincoln, *Complete Works*, ed. by John G. Nicolay and John Hay, 12 vols. (New York: Francis D. Tandy, 1907), 1:38; Dwyn Mecklin Mounger, "Lynching in Mississippi, 1830-1930" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Mississippi State University, 1961): 1.

[272] Ingraham, *The South-West by a Yankee*, 2:186-87, 189; George W. Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion Through the Slave States* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1844): 138; John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943): 252.

[273] Mounger, "Lynching in Mississippi," 49, 52; see Julia C. Brown, "Reconstruction in Yalobusha and Grenada Counties," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* XII (University, Miss.: Printed for the Society, 1912): 239-40; Earnest F. Puckett, "Reconstruction in Monroe County," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* XI (University, Miss.: Printed for the Society, 1910): 130; Ruth Watkins, "Reconstruction in Newton County," *Publications of the Mississippi*

afterward, Mississippians justified mob killing in their state by asserting that their women were in constant danger of attack by African American men—this in spite of the fact that an examination of statistical evidence indicates that only a minority of Black victims was accused of such actions. By 1870, white public opinion in Mississippi had begun to turn against the Klan. The editor of *The Macon Beacon* spoke forcefully, charging that, "What they call executing the law is simply assassination, and often aggravated, too, by orgies from which an inquisition would shrink with horror." Other editors denied the existence of the Klan within the bounds of Mississippi.[274]

In the early 1900s, editors still encouraged lynchings. For example, on Christmas Day 1907, *The Jackson Clarion-Ledger* headlined a story about an Arkansas man who had killed a woman's dogs then seriously wounding the woman and her son. The paper urged that the man should be "swung to first limb." Still, growing opposition to lynching was indicated by the fact that in January 1903, an Attala County grand jury indicted men accused of killing two Negroes. Mounger wrote that this appeared to have been the first court action against a mob in the state's history (excluding federal cases during Reconstruction).[275]

In his 1903 gubernatorial campaign, James K. Vardaman labeled "the colored man" . . . "unmoral and debased" and predicted that unless he won, it would be necessary to institute mass lynchings, "to keep the Negro in his place." However, after being elected, Vardaman saved accused African Americans from being lynched, in two incidents, dispatching companies of militia. Once, he boarded a chartered train and sheltered the accused man in his private car.[276]

Lynchings continued with frequency during the period after World War I and into the Great Depression. There were 75 mob killings in Mississippi between 1919 and 1930. All but two of the victims were African American. Governor Henry L. Whitfield spoke against lynching in his inaugural message to the legislature, urging local authorities, "to use every means within their power to prevent lynchings and thus eliminate a potent cause of race friction and ill feelings." He pledged "every possible help" to those enforcing the law. Whitfield twice called out the National Guard to prevent lynchings. His successor, Dennis Murphree, took similar action on five occasions. Governor Bilbo, however, having received an appeal from an African American association protesting a lynching in the state, responded with the words, "Go to hell." Nineteen-thirty-two was the first year no vigilante killings took place in Mississippi.[277]

Dwyn Mecklin Mounger, son of the Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger, was one of the first Mississippians to make a thorough examination of lynching's place in the state's history. His thesis, "Lynching in Mississippi, 1830-1930," written at Mississippi State University in 1961, was an important contribution to the state's literature on civil rights and racial justice. His work, along with that of his uncle, the Rev. John M. Mecklin, helped open the state's conscience to examine the unspeakable acts of terrorism that had so often caused its administration of civil justice to fail.

Historical Society XI (University, Miss.: Printed for the Society, 1910): 216-17; Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890*, 219-20, 225.

[274] See James Weldon Johnson, "Lynching—America's National Disgrace," *Current History* 19 (1924): 597; Mississippi Bar Association, *Mississippi and the Mob* (Jackson: Jackson Printing Co., 1926): 16-17; See U. S. Congress, *Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 13 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 11:543; Mounger, "Lynching in Mississippi," 72.

[275] *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (January 19, 1903); Mounger, "Lynching in Mississippi," 100.

[276] Eugene E. White, "Anti-Racial Agitation in Politics: James Kimble Vardaman in the Mississippi Gubernatorial Campaign of 1903," *Journal of Mississippi History* 7 (April 1945): 92; James E. Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905): 262-63.

[277] Cutler, 102, 111; John G. Van Deusen, *The Black Man in White America* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1938): 148; *Mississippi and the Mob*, 1; Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933): 472.

The Rev. C. W. Grafton Confronts a Murder

Perhaps the best-known country church pastor in Mississippi, the Rev. Cornelius Washington Grafton, served his entire ordained ministry (1873-1934) among the small congregation at Union Church, midway between Brookhaven and Fayette. A leader in the Presbytery and Synod of Mississippi, he was one of only two Mississippi ministers to be elected moderator of the PCUS Assembly during their times of service in the state. Grafton is the only Mississippi Presbyterian minister to be the subject of a book-length biography, *Life and Thought of a Country Preacher*, published by John Knox Press, the PCUS publishing house in Richmond, eight years after his death by Presbyterian scholar, the Rev. J. Allen Cabaniss, who was then pastor of the nearby church at Columbia.[278] Grafton holds the record for longest service to a single congregation in the state, having spent his entire ministry at Union Church, a span of 61 years.

One situation that especially aroused Grafton's ire was lynching, a condemnation he extended to all unnecessary or unlawful killing. His attitude came forth in the aftermath of an incident in the Caseyville community where Bensalem Church, the small congregation Grafton served in addition to Union Church, was located. Bensalem Presbyterian Church was organized in 1854 in rural Lincoln County. The incident involved Jonathan E. McCallum, born in Monroe County, North Carolina, October 10, 1838. He was the congregation's session clerk. McCallum was alleged to have killed Dock Gordon, a Black teenager in the neighborhood, who "had attempted an atrocious crime on a female relative."

With public knowledge of the murder hanging in the air, the congregation gathered for its August 20, 1882 Sunday service. Grafton led his flock through the customary songs and prayers, methodically progressing towards the sermon. For his text, the preacher chose Mark 9:44, where Jesus described hell as a place, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." He made no explicit reference to McCallum or Gordon, but as Grafton historian David T. Irving remarks, "Given how Grafton would later describe the punishment of murderers, one struggles not to connect the sermon's text to the circumstances surrounding its delivery."[279]

The Bensalem session met, with McCallum present, August 20, 1882, to determine if their fellow elder had violated a moral law.

According to the record,

> The Session [met] having knowledge of the fact that our Brother J E McCallum had within a few days shot and killed a certain negro [*sic*] in the neighborhood . . . . Resolved to institute process in this case. John Gilchrist was appointed prosecutor and was directed to prepare the indictment and conduct the case.

Eight days later, the following record was made:

> Bensalem Church,
> Aug 28th, 1882
>
> I John Gilchrist do hereby charge J. E. McCallum with violation of the 6th commandment under the following specifications. Said J. E. McCallum did on the 14th day of the present month at a certain house belonging to Dr. A. Baker in the County of Copiah & the State of Mississippi shoot & kill one negro man known as Dock Gordon . . . .

[278] Allen Cabaniss, *Life and Thought of a Country Preacher*, with a foreword by William Waarren Sweet (Richmond: John Knox, 1942). The book may be seen online at https://archive.org/details/lifethoughtofcou0000caba/page/n7/mode/2up. Accessed 1.27.26.

[279] David T. Irving, "'Mississippi's Greatest Minister," 93-94.

> The accused bring called on to give answer pleaded as follows . . . of the specifications—"guilty of the charge [and] not guilty." By this answer he explained that he admitted the killing but denied that it was a breach of the moral law . . . .
>
> 1st The evidence was clear to his mind that the negro in question had attempted an atrocious crime on a female relative.
>
> 2nd Acting as a civil officer he was endeavoring to arrest him.
>
> 3rd The negro attempted to make his escape . . . .
>
> Resolved—That it is our belief that the attempt to commit an atrocious crime is as [indecipherable words] in the sight of God as the act itself. The Session then being satisfied . . . the negro had attempted a fearful assault on female virtue. Rendered the following decisions—The killing justifiable, therefore the charge is not sustained.

The Ben Salem elders met as scheduled on September 2. "The indictment against J. E. McCallum with the names of the witnesses known to support it was placed in the hands of the accused [and] the clerk was directed to [illegible] all parties to appear before the session."

The session met again on September 16 to try the McCallum case. Gilchrist's indictment named two witnesses, Dr. A. Baker, a fellow elder, and Lawson Boothe. McCallum, having admitted the killing, proceeded to explain why he thought he was justified in the act, saying that, "the negro in question had attempted an atrocious crime on a female relative" and had tried to escape from an officer of the law endeavoring to arrest him. The session discussed the matter, with each elder given an opportunity to express his opinion. Then they passed a resolution "That it is our beleafe [*sic*] that the attempt to commit an atrocious crime is as culpable in the sight of God as the act itself. The Session then being satisfied from the statement of Dr. S Baker and Mr. Boothe, [that] the negro had attempted a fearful assault on female virtue—rendered its decision: [that] the killing [was] justifiable, [so that] the charge [was] not sustained."

After deliberation, Grafton prepared the following statement, which he submitted to the session the following day, and which was admitted to the record as follows:

> I concur with all my brethren who had the following principles.
>
> 1st The civil officer is God's minister . . . appointed to execute wrath upon offenders.
>
> 2nd A divine law clothes withal the right and duty to use force wherever necessary in the arrest of a criminal—force that will lead to the shedding of blood or the destruction of life if the case demands.
>
> 3rd That the criminal who resists the operations of the law by attempting to escape or otherwise is resisting the ordinance of God and does it at his own peril.
>
> But it does not seem clear to my mind that our brother used the necessary [indecipherable word] to prevent the effusion of blood in the above case. Such [indecipherable word] I think is required by the moral law and therefore I do not agree with my brethren in their decision rendered yesterday.
>
> C. W. Grafton, Moderator[280]

[280] See extended discussion of the Dock Gordon lynching in David T. Irving, "'Mississippi's Greatest Minister': A Historical Study of Cornelius W. Grafton's 61-Year Pastorate" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mississippi, 2023): 93-99.

Dock Gordon was born about 1865. His name appears in the 1880 Copiah County census, living with his mother Charlotte and siblings. The family was living near the home of Archibald Baker, a member of the Bethsalem session, near whose home Gordon was killed. He was about 17 years old at the time of his death.

Grafton's actions anticipated a later action of the PCUS Assembly. In 1899, the General Assembly adopted the following resolution against mob law:

> The General Assembly takes occasion to express its strongest condemnation of the lawless spirit abroad in the land manifesting itself in many ways, but notably in scenes of mob violence and the taking of human life, in cases of supposed or proven crime, without due process of law, involving the awful danger of inflicting death upon an innocent person, while the real criminal goes free; tending also to cheapen human life, to unsettle the social order, and to weaken or destroy that reverence for law and constituted authority which the Scriptures require all to uphold.[281]

The Assembly may have been prompted to speak out in reaction to the gruesome lynching of an African American man named Sam Holt near Atlanta on April 23, about a month before the body convened. By one account, "A crowd of nearly 2,000 gathered in Georgia in 1899 to witness the lynching of Sam Holt, an African American farm laborer charged with killing his white employer." A newspaper described the scene:

> Holt . . . was burned at the stake in a public road. . . . Before the torch was applied to the pyre, the Negro was deprived of his ears, fingers, and other portions of his body. . . . Before the body was cool, it was cut to pieces, the bones were crushed into small bits, and even the tree upon which the wretch met his fate were torn up and disposed of as souvenirs. The Negro's heart was cut in small pieces, as was also his liver. Those unable to obtain the ghastly relics directly paid more fortunate possessors extravagant sums for them. Small pieces of bone went for 25 cents and a bit of liver, crisply cooked, for 10 cents.[282]

That same year, Grafton delivered a sermon on Exodus 20:13, "Thou shalt not kill:"

> We may kill animals for food . . . We should be humane though and not kill in sport.[283] Killing in just and necessary war is permissible. Soldiers came to Jesus, and he did not rebuke them. But most wars are unnecessary.[284]
>
> Now men just here are liable themselves to commit murder. This is done by the mob that lynches the criminal however bad he is. In the town of Port Gibson, a man committed a crime for which he deserved to die and a mob hanged him. They thus gratified their vengeance. Another man committed murder and was sentenced to penitentiary for life. The same set of men in due time petitioned the Governor to pardon him. They here gratified their sympathy. In both cases they dishonored justice. Never join a band to lynch a criminal and don't ordinarily petition for the release of the criminal.[285]

Grafton Addresses a Lynching

Grafton appeared to have accepted the racial views held by most whites in his day, as indicated by a sermon in which he placed the greatest responsibility for adultery committed by white men against African American women

Cited with permission.

[281] See Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

[282] http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3178. Accessed 1.29.26

[283] It is remarkable that Grafton would make such a statement in a community filled with recreational hunters.

[284] It is also remarkable that Grafton would link his opposition to war with a sermon condemning a murder.

[285] Cited in Cabaniss, *Life and Thought of a Country Preacher*, 97-98.

upon the African American women. He also said in the course of the sermon that interracial relations were in and of themselves sinful. Still his anger was aroused in January 1919, when a lynching occurred in the Union Church neighborhood, especially since he suspected that some in his congregation may have been involved. He said that,

> The history of murder is gruesome. Cain killed Abel. Levi and Simeon [and] the Shechemites. David Killed Uriah. . . . But passing by all these, consider the killing at Union Church of a negro [*sic*], Will Reed, on the eve of this New Year, 1919.
>
> Certain persons went at night to the residence of Dr. Towns, in his absence, his mother and wife and child being there alone and unprotected, searched around till they found the negro. A shot rang out and the following morning he was found lying on the ground dead. The body was taken in charge by a jury of inquest who are now considering it.
>
> This killing was an outrage on the wife and mother of Dr. Towns. . . . The shot was fired in the hearing of every house in the village of Union Church and as such was an outrage on every woman and child in the village. . . . The killing was done close by two churches where Sunday School and church are constantly held. . . . It was done in hearing distance of the cemetery where rest the remains of [he names many 'faithful law-abiding' citizens] of days gone by. It was an insult to the memory of the dead.
>
> It was done in hearing of our Agricultural High School on which Jefferson County has expended so much money and the center of so many hopes. . . . It was an insult to the State of Mississippi, our own state that we are bound to love and honor and whose laws we must not violate. . . . It was an insult to the blood of 100,000 of our boys who have laid their lives on the battlefield and in hospitals for the rights of men. See our president and our country spending billions of money, and mothers and wives shedding tears of grief! Note the awful travail of Britain and France, all that the rights of man should be preserved; think on all these points and let us be ashamed and humiliated.
>
> The killing . . . was a violation of God's own law. . . . Finally it was an insult to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who shed his blood that men might live. . . .
>
> And then too it was an irreparable wrong to the negro, who they say was a bad negro, and therefore probably went at once to hell. . . . And the killing was without excuse, for if the negro had committed any grievous offense here was the law prepared by white men and white men could have enforced the law against the Black man. One says, 'It was only a negro.' But the negro belongs to the inferior race and every dictate of Christian manhood would urge that we defend the weak . . .
>
> What is the penalty for murder? The penalty is in a variety of forms:
>
> (a) It paralyses our labor. . . . This is the lowest form of penalty, but this is serious.
> (b) It damages the good name of our community and impairs investment. This too is a lower form but serious.
> (c) The school is damaged. People planning to send to our school would hesitate about sending here where lawlessness shows a hand. . . .
> (d) The crime of murder is a sin against one's own soul. It awakens a fire within which will burn forever. Conscience is the undying worm and the unquenchable fire. Conscience condemns it throughout eternity, for murder can never be right. And God has put in every human breast his own eternal witness.
> (e) The final punishment is *Hell.* 'Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared
> (f) for the devil and his angels.' 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.' 'But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' 'For without are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

What is the remedy for murder? Can it be pardoned? Jesus in infinite pity shed his blood for lost men and there is no sin known in the Black calendar that his blood will not wash away. And Jesus says, 'Come unto me' [Matthew 11:28-30]. Repent! Repent!! Repent!!!

Repentance means confession of our sin and turning from it to God with grief and hatred. 'If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' This is God's plan. Come then and confess your sin and God will have mercy upon you. This is the only way.

Just so long as you conceal this matter, just so long will it be as a fire within your bones. David said, 'When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of the summer.' But 'I acknowledge my sin unto thee and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' See Psalm 51:1-3 and 4.

But there was only one shot fired. One person did the killing. What about those who were present? They were giving countenance and approval by their presence. They were therefore *accessories*. The person who actually did the killing wouldn't have fired the shot or have even been there if the others hadn't been there. They are all therefore partakers of the crime and are all guilty. And they can be saved only by repentance and the blood of Jesus.

But the congregation, are we guilty, too? Remember that Achan committed the sin, but it was charged up to all Israel. God said, '*Israel* hath sinned. . . . Neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you.' All then who confess this sin done among us and denounce it with grief and indignation and promise to do all within your power to uphold the law, *rise* to your feet.

Grafton noted on the sermon manuscript: "The whole congregation arose; then prayer." He continued,

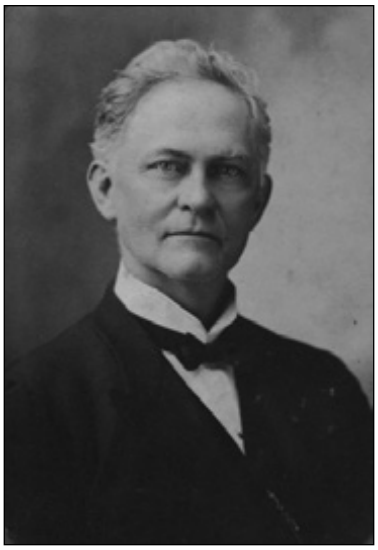
Now, if there be present any guilty person who is willing to confess his sin, let him come forward openly and publicly and give me his hand while the congregation is bowed in prayer. (The congregation bowed in prayer, but no one confessed.)[286]

Grafton noted that, "The Lord's Supper was then administered, and a sad but tender service concluded."

Though his appeal was paternalistic, it was a courageous sermon when considered in the context of the times. Grafton did not hesitate to use the argument that all in the community shared guilt. During the civil rights controversies that scarred Mississippi in the 1960s, several Presbyterian ministers—some, like Grafton, natives of the state—made similar assertions and were driven from their pulpits.[287]

[286] Cabaniss, *Life and Thought of a Country Preacher*, 188-92.

[287] See extended discission in David T. Irving, "Mississippi's Greatest Preacher," 123-27.



—Life and Thought of a Country Preacher

The Rev. C. W. Grafton spent his entire ministry at Union Church in rural Jefferson County. He served as moderator of the 1916 PCUS Assembly. His sixty-one-year pastorate in one charge was the longest in the state's Presbyterian history.

How Traveling Evangelists Accommodated African American Worshipers

The 1920s and '30s were an era when traveling evangelists crisscrossed Mississippi. One who made a memorable impression on Mississippians was the Rev. Rodney "Gipsy" Smith Jr. Smith owed his popularity to at least two facts besides his dramatic talent as a preacher: His grandfather was a converted gipsy, active in the Salvation Army, and he was an Englishman. Smith's father and two uncles were active evangelists in the British Isles. The younger Gipsy Smith was a favorite in evangelical circles on both sides of the Atlantic. He preached in such Mississippi towns as Canton, Hattiesburg, Leland, Holly Springs, and Corinth. The Jackson campaign carried on for three weeks in a large tent in Poindexter Park in May 1922, at the invitation and with the encouragement of the Rev. J. B. Hutton, pastor of the city's First Presbyterian Church. Smith preached again in Jackson two years later, with the noted English Congregationalist, the Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, coming to the city in the interval.[288]

Early in his ministry, Smith worked as a soloist for evangelist, J. Wilbur Chapman, and by 1911, Gipsy Jr. began holding his own revivals. He was ordained by the Northern Baptist denomination. His sermon, "From the Gipsy Tent to Pulpit," with the story of his grandfather's conversion, his father's colorful career, and his own call to preach was always a much-anticipated event.[289]

Smith and his father were part of an evangelistic movement that followed the work of Dwight L. Moody—a school of preachers whom William G. McLoughlin characterizes as "barn-storming" preachers, who stressed national solidarity as well as individual salvation. These men, all of whom more or less imitated the colorful Billy Sunday, put greater emphasis than Moody upon homiletic technique and psychological appeal. Smith's wife, Jessie Currie, was a Scotswoman of strong Presbyterian conviction. Their son, the Rev. G. Wilbur Smith, entered the Presbyterian ministry, serving the church at Batesville, Mississippi (1948-1975).[290]

Gipsy Smith's services in Leland, initiated at Presbyterian pastor the Rev. George L. Bitzer's behest, were a

[288] Gwen Ann Mills, "A Social History of Jackson, Mississippi, 1920-1929" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1966): 87.

[289] Charles Smith, "From the Gipsy Tent to the Pulpit," *Holly Springs South Reporter* (June 21, 1912).

[290] William G. McLoughlin Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald, 1959): 392-93; Mary Boteler, Leland, Miss., interview with Grace (Mrs. G. Wilbur) Smith, c. 1995.

true "protracted meeting." The services were scheduled from January 8 to January 28, 1923, with assistance from singer Charles Allen and pianist Mrs. Allen.

Smith followed his usual methods at Leland, preaching in a large tent erected on the town's business district. The tent was erected on a wood frame, with a rubber roof and sawdust floor. Long lines of automobiles brought eager listeners to the city. Offerings were collected in a wheelbarrow. Two thousand people were said to have attended the opening services.

The Leland Progress on January 20 carried the headline, "Glorious Time," noting, "The Revival at the Tabernacle Continues with Interest. Many Accept Invitation." He branched out to neighboring towns, holding services in those communities. The newspaper reported that Sunday would be a busy time for Smith. In the morning, he was scheduled to preach at the consolidated school in Hollandale. Then, in accord with the constraints of racial segregation, he was to conduct an afternoon service for African Americans at the Leland tabernacle. It was reported that 2,000 African Americans people attended the service, "singing old plantation melodies."

Billy Sunday Preached in Jackson

Billy Sunday also preached in Mississippi, holding services in Jackson for an entire month, December 28, 1924 to February 1, 1925. From Jackson he went to Memphis for more preaching just as events leading to the Scopes Evolution trial were brewing. Sunday told rapt audiences that "Education is chained to the Devil's throne." According to his biographer, Sunday's meetings in Memphis included a special night for African Americans and an unofficial "Klan night."

William Winter Recalled Racial Mores of His Childhood

In Collin Brooks's arresting phrase, the 1930s "was the Devil's decade. It came in like a ravening wolf and went out like a roaring lion. It began with a world in economic chaos and ended with the world at war." This was the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, during which the nation suffered a depression and a second world war. It framed the earliest memories of many older Mississippi Presbyterians in the first decades of the 21st century. Some have spoken of the genteel poverty of the older Mississippi aristocracy; however, such descriptions pay tribute more to the coping skills of people in difficult times than to their actual station in life. Most white Southern Presbyterians, whether aristocratic or not, voted with other whites for Roosevelt four times. The voters of the state were unquestionably Democratic, but old loyalties were beginning to crack as the prevailing social structures of the South proved no longer durable against the challenges of an increasingly urban, mobile, pluralistic, and industrialized economy.[291]

Individual Presbyterians thought about such problems, even if the Church had not reached consensus as to how to address them. William Winter's education began in 1929 in rural Grenada County. Because the nearest white school was seven miles away, his mother, educated as a teacher, began a one-room school at the Winter farm. Two other children attended initially, joined by seven more the following session. By the 1931-1932 school year, the county had sent a school bus to transport white children out in the county, and Winter was then able to attend "an excellent school system" in Grenada, where he completed his elementary and high school courses. Even at a young age, his conscience was pricked. The African American children had to walk to their small, completely inadequate schools. He remembered that some of the white children would spit on their Black counterparts from the school bus windows. "Negro schools" operated only between December and March, and on cold days, classes would be canceled for lack of fuel to heat the little school buildings.[1]

[291] Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All*, 3.

As Winter wrote,

> He was maybe my best friend. Perhaps more like a big brother. Two years older than I, he was bigger, stronger, more athletic. His real name was Elmo, but everyone called him Cricket. Growing up together on my father's farm, we did all the things that teenage boys in those circumstances did. We fished and swam and played together. We visited in each other's homes. We spent numberless summer days together, but when school started each fall, Cricket and I saw less and less of each other.
>
> For, you see, Cricket was black, and we couldn't go to school together. While I would board a comfortable bus for the ten-mile ride into the county seat to an impressive 12-grade school which ran for nine months each year, Cricket and his black friends were obliged to walk some two miles to a little one-room, six-grade school taught by one teacher that ran for five months. My bus would pass them on cold, rainy winter mornings, and I would wave to Cricket. It was a lot better to be a white boy I told myself. I went on to finish high school and then to get a law degree from Ole Miss. Cricket never got past the sixth grade.
>
> That's how it was in the Deep South when I was growing up in Mississippi in the 1930s. Education, we were told, was not meant for everybody. We had an economic system that was based on maintaining a large supply of unskilled labor. Too much formal schooling would ruin a good field hand they said. And not all those field hands were black.
>
> As a white boy in the South in those depression years, I was a product of a social and economic arrangement that imposed a strict system of segregation between the races in the schools. . . . Despite the clear language of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Supreme Court acquiesced in this result by establishing the doctrine of 'separate but equal' in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896.
>
> That doctrine, which was embraced by most white Southerners, neglected in actual practice to give much recognition to the word 'equal.' The result was that in the field of education the grossest kind of disparity existed between white schools and black schools.[292]

Early Stirrings Toward Civil Rights for African Americans

James C. Cobb has written that, "Southern liberals of the 1930s had largely skirted the segregation issue by insisting that the sustaining forces behind Jim Crow were not racial but economic." Some Southerners defended segregation on the ground that Blacks were protected by it by violence from white radicals, also saying that the economic health of the region depended upon the maintenance of tranquility that was encouraged by keeping the races out of friction with each other by means of segregation. "They believed that any sort of violence or racial turmoil would be extremely bad for business at a time when Henry Grady and other 'New South' apostles were busily courting Northern industrialists with promises of an abundance of cheap and orderly labor."[293]

Writing more than a decade before the desegregation controversies in Mississippi reached their crisis point, sociologist Gunnar Myrdal spoke of the role of, "huge institutional structures like the church, the school, the university, the foundation, the trade union," in furthering racial justice. He observed that on an individual basis, intolerance seemed to spread more easily than tolerance. His research, published in 1944, revealed the terrible fiction of separate-but-equal facilities. But Myrdal believed "the great institutions in society," tended to be devoted

[292] William F. Winter, "Before and after *Brown* in Mississippi," speech, George Washington University (July 1, 2004), excerpted from Andrew P. Mullins Jr., *The Measure of Our Days: Writings of William F. Winter* (Jackson: Published by the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, University of Mississippi, Distributed by the University Press of Mississippi, 2006): 124-25; Christopher M. Span, *From Cotton Field to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi, 1865-1875* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: The Racial Socialization of Black and White Southern Children, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[293] James C. Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 11

to the American Creed, to "progress, liberty, equality, and humanitarianism." He said that at least in the broadest sense, the churches of the South were pulling the region toward conformity with wider American societal norms. Yet, as Numan Bartley has written, the churches and other institutions "did not provide the stabilizing element" that had been hoped for as the South's massive resistance to racial change took shape. "That the white-controlled churches failed in this regard was nothing short of an American tragedy."[294]

The PCUS Assembly and its U.S.A. Church counterpart did speak, but both found that their pronouncements had a divisive effect on their constituencies, particularly in Mississippi. The 1943 PCUS Assembly urged that Christians who condemned Nazi persecution of non-Aryans must, "combat with all earnestness and power racial prejudice against Negroes in the South." The next year, while asserting that "few Negroes or white men" desired the abrogation of all racial distinctions, or that it was the Church's responsibility to bring about such changes, it pointed out that thousands of African Americans in the armed forces were exposed to equal dangers as whites, and that in the military they enjoyed privileges not theirs in civil life, either in the North or in the South. The Assembly declared that African Americans who had fought for freedom and justice abroad "might rightly expect to receive a larger share of these on their return."[295]

Not all agreed with the logic of these pronouncements—carefully qualified though they were, for in the latter half of the 20th century, the American South, already a region of many religious denominations—had become a region divided by faith. The division was not so much a rivalry among existing denominations as it was a rivalry within denominations. It was a rivalry of biblical interpretation—as Jews and Christians argued whether their scriptures gave sanction to efforts to challenge the surrounding society's denial of civil rights to Blacks as well as other benefits to those who occupied lower social and economic places in the surrounding society.

Presbyterians were neither the most recalcitrant nor the most venturesome in this regard. The most notable activists and pamphleteers came from other traditions, or who were motivated primarily by secular political calculations. By nature a moderating force, as well as by now occupying a place of reduced numerical influence, Presbyterians often dealt with what they saw as extreme reaction, conservative or liberal, by refraining from discussion of ideas or activities of which they disapproved. By this, they sought to contribute to an atmosphere of decency and order, but later reflection showed that this unintentionally give sanction to things they deplored. Yet, white Mississippi Presbyterians could hardly be described as conflict averse, and during this period, they regularly condemned things they saw as threats to the health and stability of their region. They also disavowed the increasing interest of fellow Presbyterians and others in affairs they considered their concern and theirs alone—particularly the welfare and civil relations of the African American populace in their midst, some of whom were, in fact, Presbyterians. "Outside interference"—even and especially by other Presbyterians—was a thing to be deplored.

Mary Wharton Addressed Racial Issues in Port Gibson Sunday School Lessons

Many thoughtful Mississippians, especially religious women, accepted the calls for change that leaders like Lilly, Long, and Thompson were sounding. They recognized that the state had to improve race relations. Through the conferences for African American women at Jackson State College, the Synod of Mississippi's Presbyterian women had made ongoing efforts to promote interracial education and cooperation in the 1940s. Interracial committees were created as part of each presbyterial and synodical women's auxiliary. These resulted in better acquaintance and understanding among women from both racial groups. Though the Negro women, who were the subjects of the white committee members' concern, were cast in subordinate roles, such contacts between black and white through church work were among the few occasions, outside domestic or farm settings, when Mississippians of the black and white races held formal conversations with each other.

[294] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944): 1:80; Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997): 293.

[295] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1943): 75; (1944): 141ff.

One woman who spoke for change was Mary Wharton, a longtime member of the Presbyterian Church in Port Gibson, where she served as choir director, organist, and Sunday school teacher. At the time of her death in 1954, she had spent 13 years teaching an adult Bible class. Volumes of her lessons are preserved, indicating that she promoted the concerns of the Social Gospel: prohibition of alcohol, child labor, education, and race relations. In a survey of America's "deadly enemies," she identified "broken" homes, low moral standards, intemperance, "cruel injustice," and racial intolerance. In a lesson titled, "The Christian and the Race Problem," she told her class that, "We have a race problem because one race feels superior to another." She said, "We have to free ourselves from . . . prejudice . . . [and] treat [the] race problem as [a human problem. . . . We value our liberty [and] opportunity & must make them for others." She cited an educational system that spent $12 per child for Negro children and $100 for whites. She concluded that, "Christ must have a breaking heart as he views [the] hatred and ill will some of us have towards various races." Historian Dennis J. Mitchell wrote that, "Because she never actively condemned segregation, her church and community accepted her social gospel and embraced her as a leader."[296]

The Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger Defends Accused African American Murderer

In the summer of 1936, Presbyterian minister Dwyn Milton Mounger came to the defense of an African American tenant farmer named Luther Benton, from the farming community of Steele, Mississippi, northeast of Forest, where Mounger was serving as pastor. Mounger learned from Beaman Triplett, a young lawyer and member of the choir in the Forest Church, that Benton was accused of murder and had no one to represent him in court. Triplett expressed sympathy for Benton's plight but was afraid to represent him, lest there be repercussions from the racist portion of the white community. Benton, with his wife and children, had lived for several years in a small house on land owned by a white man named Clay Bassett. He farmed cotton, corn, sweet potatoes and sugarcane on a half-and-half share basis with Bassett. Bassett's wife was from a prominent Scott County family with ties to the church Mounger served in Forest.[297]

Bassett's death occurred late one night when he had gone to Benton's cabin with a woman not his wife and called the Black man out. Bassett, who was openly adulterous, had allegedly been drinking and boasted to his lover that he could, "make Luther Benton come out of his house and dance a jig." Benton was insulted and frightened by the humiliating demand and shouted out to Bassett to desist and go home. After repeated calls to come outside were ignored, the Black man came out in the darkness and shot Benton twice. But there was a difference in opinion as to how quickly the second shot followed the first. Bassett's supporters claimed that Benton had waited 15 minutes, reloading his gun and shooting Basset dead in cold blood. Bassett's supporters argued that Luther Benton showed no mercy to Bassett and deserved none himself. Facing almost certain conviction in an all-white court, Benton had hurt his case by escaping from the jail in Forest. No doubt aware that he would likely face execution, he was pursued through the western United States, and after evading capture in Arizona when he jumped from the window of a moving train, he was finally apprehended in northern California, near the Oregon state line.[298]

Taking the matter to heart, Mounger acted on Beaman Triplett's plea and contacted several lawyers on behalf of Benton. Mounger's cousin, William, the vice president of a large Jackson bank, offered to pay a lawyer if one

[296] Cited in Randy J. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, Heritage of Mississippi Series, Volume II (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi for the Mississippi Historical Society, 2001): 192-94; see Mitchell, *A New History of Mississippi*, 332-33. See also Leeann G. Reynolds, *Maintaining Segregation: Children and Racial Instruction in the South, 1920-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

[297] "Bassett Funeral Held; Trial for Negro in October," *Forest News Register* (May 14, 1936): 1; Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 13-18.

[298] "Negroes Escape from Local Jail Monday Night," *Forest News Register* (June 11, 1936): 1; "Negroes Escape from Local Jail Monday Night," *Forest News Register* (June 11, 1936): 1; "Escaped Slayer of Bassett Is Caught in Weed, California," *Forest News Register* (July 23, 1936): 1; "Murderer Dives Thru Window of Train," *Forest News Register* (August 6, 1936): 1. "Escaped Slayer of Bassett Is Caught in Weed, California," *Forest News Register* (July 23, 1936): 1; "Murderer Dives Thru Window of Train," *Forest News Register* (August 6, 1936): 1.

could be found. But no attorney from Forest would take the case, all fearing white reprisals. Mounger realized that Benton would have to be represented by an attorney from some other town but was still unsuccessful in finding a lawyer for Benton. Woods Eastland, a local attorney (and father of then-U. S. Congressman James O. Eastland) advised Mounger that, "In a white man's court with all white officials and jury, he is in grave danger of getting a death sentence unless something is done." Eastland counseled that the best strategy would be to have the court appoint a lawyer, as such an attorney, being "court-appointed," was likely to incur less racist resentment. He also counseled Mounger to make his own investigation of the case. to be sure the court-appointed attorney was fully briefed and that because white lawyers, when appointed to represent African Americans against whites in capital cases often came to court in an inebriated condition, so as to lessen any sense of responsibility for pleading the cause of a Black man against a white, to see that when the lawyer appeared before the court he was sober.

Eastland's advice was helpful and somewhat ironic in that, as a young man in 1904, he had organized the gruesome lynching of an African American woman and her lover who was accused of murdering Eastland's brother James.[299]

After investigating the case, Mounger agreed to assist in the defense, knowing full well that this might cause a reaction among Bassett's relatives in his church, and other members. Nonetheless, Mounger located and interviewed several witnesses from the Steele community who agreed to testify on Benton's behalf. W. I. Bunn, an attorney from the nearby county seat of Newton, was appointed by the court to represent Benton. Dwyn and Bessie Mounger entertained him in the manse, informing him about the case and making sure that he stayed sober.

The trial attracted large crowds of white and Black spectators, and Mounger was present for the entirety of the proceedings. It was not lost on the white community that one of their ministers had taken an unusual interest in the case, supporting the defendant when his sister-in-law was a member of Mounger's church. Mounger knew that what he was doing could seriously affect his congregation, even causing a split within the church. Crucial to Benton's case was the admission by Clay Bassett's paramour that she had indeed been with him on the night in question and that they had been involved in a tryst.

"Why were you with him? What were you doing with him?" asked Bunn.

"Don't you know what we were doing?" "What do you expect a married man and his girlfriend would be doing together at night?" she responded.

Mounger remembered that loud guffaws erupted from the audience as the judge banged his gavel for order. Other testimony was incriminating to Benton, and the district attorney insinuated that Mounger had misplaced sympathies for the Black defendant, saying that, "Rev. Mounger is sympathetic to the defendant. You know that though preachers are tenderhearted, they are not very knowledgeable nor practical."

The jury considered the case for several hours, and in an era when African Americans were always losers in cases involving whites, Luther Benton was convicted of manslaughter (but not premeditated murder). The judge sentenced Benton to a term at Parchman State Penitentiary, where he was incarcerated from 1938 to 1953,[300] after which he was released on account of ill health. Mounger took comfort in that he was spared the death penalty.[2]

Mounger admitted, that "I was fearful, apprehensive that I, as a minister, was taking such a public part in the defense of a Black man who had killed a white man, that this might have a disturbing and disrupting effect on the community and especially on the Presbyterian congregation I was serving, and that this would result in my saying farewell to some of the most generous and lovable people I have ever known." The repercussions Mounger feared did not materialize, and Bassett's relatives continued to attend the services of the church and were cordial toward their pastor.[301]

It was the rare Mississippi pastor who spoke about race from the pulpit. One who did was the Rev. Charles E. Guice, who served the J. J. White Memorial Presbyterian Church in McComb. A dynamic young minister, who had earlier served in Cleveland, Guice asked his McComb congregation in the autumn of 1939, "Has the Church

[299] Chris Myers Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper: The Freedom Struggle of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: The New Press, 2008): 23-32.

[300] "Benton Negro Is Given Life Term," *Forest News Register* (March 17, 1938): 1.

[301] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 17-18.

done enough when it has taught its members that, 'God so loved the world' (John 3:16), that Christ died for and loves all men? Or should the Church not also make clear that that person who does not have something of Christ's spirit with reference to any other race or class has no right to call himself a disciple of Christ?"[302]

Mounger Organized Tri-Racial Goodwill Festivals at Carthage

Progress toward racial justice in Mississippi moved at a glacial pace. A few white individuals and organizations sought to push the matter forward. One example was the work of the Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger and others, beginning in 1948 at Carthage, where he was now pastor. Carthage differed from other Mississippi communities in that it had a large Native American community, members of the Choctaw Nation who had once inhabited a large swath of central and southern Mississippi. Assisted by the Rotary Club and other community leaders, Mounger organized a series of Tri-racial Good-will Festivals. These were held each October for a span of five years, bringing together the majority white community along with African Americans and members of the Choctaw Indian Nation.

People of the three races gathered on the athletic field of Carthage High School where speakers of note addressed the gatherings. Choctaw women displayed baskets and other Native American crafts, and Choctaw men entertained by demonstrating their game of stickball, a Native American field competition similar to lacrosse. African Americans sang spirituals.

Though paternalistic in nature, the festivals occurred in an era when little was done to promote friendships and cooperation across racial lines. Strict segregation rules were relaxed somewhat, and *The Jackson Daily News* ran a photo of Mounger sharing a victory handshake, clasping the raised hands of African American and Choctaw Indian leaders. The festivals received wide publicity and brought an increased degree of acquaintance and understanding to a sharply divided community.[303]

"The South Is Another Land"

World War II brought many more people into the South. As Cobb observed, "Northern GIs were struck not only by the abysmal poverty and ignorance they observed among both [Southern] blacks and whites but by the brutal rigidity of the omnipresent color line. Reports that German POWs were dining in Southern cafés with their white military guards while black soldiers traveling with them were required to eat out back were especially jarring for a great many Americans born outside the region."[304]

In his widely acclaimed book, *The Mind of the South* (1941), W. J. Cash wrote that the most dangerous characteristic of this mind was a "savage ideal" of communally enforced conformity of thought mandating intense hostility to any suggestion of change or criticism of the South. Cash pointed to the "profound conviction" shared by Northerners and Southerners alike that "the South is another land," so sharply "differentiated" from the rest of America as to constitute "not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it."[305]

John Egerton echoed this analysis, writing, that

> Massive contradictions were bred by [the South's] self-imposed posture of intellectual isolation. The South embraced Prohibition with righteous fervor long before Congress approved the Eighteenth Amendment in 1917 and long after it was repealed in 1933—but from start to finish, Southerners drank as much liquor as anyone else, and made more illicit moonshine than everyone else. . . . Gambling and other vices, and lawlessness in general, thrived in a shadowy Southern landscape hidden from public scrutiny.

[302] Charles E. Guice, "The Challenge to the Church Today," *Christian Observer* (October 18, 1939): 5-6.

[303] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 20; "Tri-Racial Good Will Festival Slated at Carthage," *Jackson Daily News* (October 23, 1949); "Tri-Racial Meet Attracts 2,500 Visitors in Leake," *Jackson Daily News* (October 27, 1950).

[304] Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II,* xiv.

[305] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1941): vii-viii, 134.

> Even as the South was sending the highest percentage of people to church and displaying in other ways an abundance of piety, it was spilling its own blood as if the region were at war. Only a couple of states in the so-called Wild West came close to matching the South's proclivity for violent crimes. . . . Lynching, a damning measure of any society's tolerance for violent behavior, had always been a problem in the United States, and especially in the South.

Egerton wrote that the region's colleges and universities contributed another form of mental isolation:

> A rigid orthodoxy of thought and opinion," so that scholars who dared to broaden the prevailing historical, scientific, political, religious, or racial perspectives of their communities were forced out. . . . The manifestations of this narrow view reached far beyond the academy. They could be seen in the bigotry and intolerance of all religious people toward the nonreligious (of whom there were precious few admitted ones); of Christians toward Jews . . . of Protestants toward Catholics; and even of Baptists and Methodists toward Presbyterians and Episcopalians—who were, of course, reciprocally disdainful.

Meanwhile, nearing the end of his life, the unreconstructed Senator Bilbo published one of his popular speeches entitled, "Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization."[306]

Segregation did not generate the financial profits that slavery had. David L. Chappell has noted that,

> Many persons, including self-interested church leaders saw that there was no economic incentive to maintain segregation. Antebellum southern clergymen quite rationally—and with heartfelt passion—had defended slavery and the whole 'way of life' that made their slave-owning parishioners rich. A century later there was no correspondingly clear-cut reason for southern clergymen to defend segregation—a very different system of keeping black Christians of the South underfoot. . . . Segregationists could not live by politics alone. . . . They needed cultural legitimacy." [Still,] "The divided white churches in the South. . . . could not contribute much to a militant defense of segregation—as politicians seemed ready to do."[307]

A new Mississippi had emerged after 1920. Cotton was dethroned as factories came and the mechanization of farms displaced thousands of workers. Communities no longer derived their principal income from farming, and throughout the period, more people moved away than came to it. The state lost seats in Congress and thus also political influence. There was a significant movement from farm to town, as whites sought better educational opportunities for their children. But many who came to the smaller towns were economically disadvantaged, lacking in education, and joined churches other than the Presbyterian.[308]

Presbyterians contributed strong leadership in the small towns and cities of the state. As in earlier eras, their principal interest was in the field of education. This period saw the Church's greatest contribution to public education, as Presbyterians served as teachers, board members, and administrators in the state's colleges and

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[306] John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1994): 26-27; Theodore G. Bilbo, *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization* (Poplarville: Dream House, 1947). In 1958 the United Daughters of the Confederacy denounced "miscegenation as a Communist objective."

[307] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004): 149-51.

[308] See Donald Holley, *The Second Great Emancipation: The Mechanical Cotton Picker, Black Migration, and How They Shaped the Modern South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000); Alferdteen Harrison, ed., *Black Exodus* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991); James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

public schools. Life was not easy as the effects of the Great Depression lingered into the era of World War II, and for this reason, many attribute almost heroic qualities to ordinary folk who lived in this era.[309]

The state faced almost insurmountable problems. As Westley F. Busbee has remarked, "It would have been difficult for Mississippi to make progress in any case, but with more than half of its inhabitants in a state of subordination and second-class citizenship,[310] genuine advances were virtually impossible."[311] The PCUS suffered a membership decline during this period as Southern Christians became disillusioned—some, perhaps, surrendering their church membership because they could not make financial contributions. The Vicksburg Church, for example, which reported a membership of 330 in 1926, declined to a low of 160 in 1940.

Since the days of the earliest white settlement, Mississippi's population had been characterized by the presence of the very rich and the very poor, many of whom arrived as slaves. By the 20th century, most of the freed slaves and their descendants, as well as many poor whites, worked as tenant farmers or sharecroppers. Presbyterians by and large ministered to the more prosperous classes, though some efforts were made to reach the poor. Visiting newspaperman Jonathan Daniels observed that, "The journalists, scholars, and politicians who traveled south to document and publicize the sharecroppers' struggles often were shocked by what they considered a paradoxically impoverished land, a world of fertile fields and poor people, wealthy planters, and suffering sharecroppers. The land 'ought to give men plenty, but it betrays.'" The situation presented the sharpest contrast in the counties nearest the Mississippi River. "The poorest men are on the richest land." Historian Chris Myers Asch noted that life "revolved around that fluffy fiber that enriched the one and impoverished the other."[312]

Mississippi Presbyterians clashed with liberal and socialist adherents of Northern Presbyterian and Reformed churches who undertook cooperative farming experiments designed to relieve agrarian poverty in the Mississippi Delta as well as to promote greater racial equity among the people with whom they worked. In an era when the New Deal fostered many social and economic experiments across the South, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA), historian Fred C. Smith has asserted that "The most radical, progressive, and potentially the most promising of the Depression-era efforts came not from the phalanx of New Deal planners and government men, but from the minds and consciences of liberal Christians and an arm of the Socialist Party in America."[313]

Presbyterians Worked in Controversial Mississippi Cooperative Farming Experiments

An organization called the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, begun in 1934 by two Arkansas socialists, worked to organize farm laborers in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas, helping them to seek higher wages. Several strikes took place. This effort was encouraged by Northern philanthropists, as well as theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, a minister in the Evangelical and Reformed Church and a professor in the Union Theological Seminary of New York City. Movement leaders also organized the Delta Cooperative Farm in Mississippi's Bolivar County. The Bolivar County farm spanned 2,000 acres. The Rev. Sherwood Eddy, a Princeton Seminary-educated Presbyterian missionary and YMCA leader was on the board which oversaw this work. In 1936, Niebuhr and Eddy offered their support and influence to the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Niebuhr hoped that the work might give practical

[309] John K. Bettersworth, *Mississippi: A History* (Austin, Tex.: Steck, 1959): 440. C. W. Grafton provides a long list of Presbyterians who taught in state colleges and universities "History of Presbyterianism in Mississippi" (unpublished manuscript, 1927): 642-46, as well as a list of Presbyterians who served in governmental positions, 590-602.

[310] As we have seen, the Mississippi situation involved not only race, but ancestry, economics, and class. For a comprehensive study of the subject, see Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020).

[311] Busbee, *Mississippi: A History*; Cunny, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of* Vicksburg, 3-4.

[312] Jonathan Daniels, *A Southerner Discovers the South* (New York: Macmillan, 1938): 136; Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper*, 297; cf. Eugene Dattel, *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

[313] Fred C. Smith, "The Delta Cooperative Farm and the Death of a Vision," *Journal of Mississippi History* 71 (Fall 2009): 235.

expression to ideas put forward in his book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932).[314] While farm laborers were elected to the board, the only prominent Mississippian to serve on the board was the outspoken Episcopal bishop, the Rt. Rev. Theodore DuBose Bratton.[315]

Many of the workers who had joined the union as well as their families had been evicted from their homes as an unintended consequence of the Roosevelt administration's crop reduction program. To stabilize or increase prices for farm products, landowners were paid to forego planting on designated acreage. Reduced acreage meant a decreased need for labor, and instead of passing some of the subsidy on to their workers, many landowners pocketed the government payments and refused to honor contracts then in force with their tenants. This action caused widespread suffering across Arkansas and Mississippi.[316] Tenants or sharecroppers farmed 85% of the land in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas. Wages for agricultural laborers averaged between 50 and 75 cents a day. As new federal programs were implemented, planters saw an advantage to hiring temporary labor as opposed to having tenants under contract. Hundreds of families were displaced. In the spring of 1934, Hiram Norcross, the absentee owner of a 5,000-acre plantation near Tyronza, Arkansas, evicted 23 of his 248 tenant families. Many of these persons, with nowhere to go and finding themselves in utter poverty, pitched tents along the highway.[317] Unlike sharecroppers, tenant farmers rented the land they farmed. They had rights protected by the contracts they made annually with landowners. Sharecroppers and temporary laborers had no rights. During this period, some planters manipulated the status of tenant farmers, terming them sharecroppers, thereby relieving themselves of responsibility to supply housing, seed, farm implements, food, and credit. Many such workers allied with the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union—an action that caused alarm among landowners, prompting further evictions.[318]

In the spring of 1935, Socialist Party presidential candidate Norman Thomas, a minister in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. visited Northeast Arkansas and addressed a group of displaced farmworkers, members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Thomas was assaulted and dragged from the platform by political opponents allied with plantation interests.[319] Late in 1935, the Rev. Sam Franklin, also a minister of the U.S.A. Church and a missionary just home from Japan where he had been engaged with cooperative farming, contacted Eddy, expressing interest in the sharecroppers' plight. Franklin believed that cooperative farming methods could offer a way out of the dilemma the displaced farmers were facing. Eddy sent Franklin to the South to gather information about conditions, and en route, he visited the federal subsistence farming project in Arthurdale, West Virginia—a project to which Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt had devoted much interest and effort. Franklin envisioned a similar project for the Mid-South farm workers, and though political and economic conditions had changed to the point that federal dollars could not be obtained, plans were made for a cooperative farm in Mississippi. In March 1936, Eddy and Franklin arranged for purchase of a 2,138-acre tract north of Rosedale near Hillhouse in Bolivar County. Funds came from a donation by William H. Timken, a wealthy manufacturer of roller bearings for railroad cars in Canton, Ohio. Slightly more than 600 acres were suitable for planting. The remaining land consisted of cypress swamp and ridge lands.[320]

Thirty displaced families were settled on the farm. In the first year of operations, the Delta Cooperative Farm members established a sawmill, using the cypress and other timber to build houses for families. They cleared some new land and produced 152 bales of cotton. In addition to housing and shares in the farm, amounting to $327 per

[314] Smith, "The Delta Cooperative Farm," 236-37.

[315] Sherwood Eddy, *A Door of Opportunity or An American Adventure in Cooperation with Sharecroppers* (New York: Eddy and Page, 1937): 9.

[316] Smith, "The Delta Cooperative Farm," 235-41.

[317] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen: Plain Folk, Roosevelt, Jesus, and Marx in the Great Depression South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

[318] See Charles S. Johnson, Edwin R. Embree, and W. W. Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935).

[319] *Trouble in Goshen*, 243-44.

[320] *Trouble in Goshen*, 245-47; see also Jerry W. Dallas, "The Delta and Providence Cooperative Farms: A Mississippi Experiment in Cooperative Farming and Racial Cooperation, 1936-1956," *Mississippi Quarterly* 4 (1987): 283-308.

family, each household also received $122 in deferred payment certificates for labor in cabin construction and clearing fields. These amounts compared favorably to the $212 the average Southern tenant farmer earned at the time.[321] Decisions concerning operations were made by a council of five, no more than three of each race, elected by the membership of the cooperative. The council decided that African American and white families would live in close proximity, with houses for each race separated only by the road. White children attended the local public school where they received eight months of education. The African American children attended a segregated school that was open only four-and-a-half months per year. The cooperative established a school for the African American children to supplement the meager provision the state of Mississippi made for African American education. Franklin conducted church services every Sunday, though out of respect for prevailing sensibilities, he kept African American and white members separate on most occasions.[322] While greeted with some local suspicion principally because of the status granted to Black workers and the white workers' use of polite forms of address when speaking to African Americans, the effort received favorable publicity outside the region. Eddy wrote an article for *The Christian Century*, stating that the two races had cooperated on the basis of interracial justice, noting that "we have been grateful for the cooperation of many in our adopted state of Mississippi." Mrs. Roosevelt asked Eddy to visit her and discuss the farm.[323]

Beginning in the summer of 1937, Black and white college students assisted as volunteers at the farm. They built bridges, cared for children, cleared land, chopped cotton, cooked, and socialized with another. However, despite wide interest and encouragement from across the country, the farm did not prosper. Tensions arose between the former sharecroppers and the farm leadership. The soil, mostly buckshot, proved difficult to cultivate. Efforts to diversify the crops produced—that is, to grow crops other than cotton—were not successful, and in 1937, the farm lost money.[324]

In addition to practical problems, ideological controversies arose among the farm's leaders. Although some of those who supported the Delta and Providence Farms were secular in orientation, others called themselves Christian Socialists. They did not speak in traditional Marxist terms, nor were they interested in party orthodoxy or direction. As Smith observed, "They were nominal socialists and did not see any particular economic or political ideology as a cure for economic and cultural distress." They undertook their work on pragmatic grounds. They did not see that service to God had to be accomplished under any particular type of government or economic system. They simply saw a kind of voluntary socialism as the best response to problems in the society around them. Eddy and Franklin saw economic and social improvement as a function of practical religion, but the secular socialists believed that their efforts suffered due to the religious color the presence of ministers and other Christian workers gave to the effort.[325]

Undiscouraged by the 1937 financial losses, the farm leaders and their Northern backers sought to carry on. They decided to expand the operation. In 1938, an old plantation called Providence, some 2,880 acres, was purchased. It lay 110 miles distant in Holmes County. Sam Franklin and his wife Dorothy moved to Providence. The Delta farm failed in 1941, and all effort shifted to work at the new location. The mechanical cotton picker was dramatically transforming life and work in Mississippi. As the planters of the Delta Council noted at their meeting in the spring of 1946, "No agricultural area of the nation is undergoing such a revolution as the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta." Accordingly, Providence Farm was supported by donations, not production, justifying its work on the basis of social services provided.[326]

There were changes in personnel. World War II intervened, and Franklin left for military service. Among the

[321] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 246, 250-51.

[322] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 253, 255.

[323] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 252, 261-62; Sherwood Eddy, "The Delta Cooperative's First Year," *Christian Century* 54 (February 3, 1937): 1340.

[324] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 256, 260.

[325] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 238, 249, 263-65.

[326] "Delta Council Annual Report, 1945-1946." Delta Council Collection. C. W. Capps Archive, Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi.

principals at Providence were A. E. "Gene" Cox and his wife, the former Lindsey Hail. Cox was a graduate of Texas Christian University, and served as bookkeeper and later as resident director until the farm ceased operations in 1956. Lindsey Cox was a graduate of Beaver College, a Presbyterian U.S.A. institution on the outskirts of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and a recent graduate of the Massachusetts General Hospital School of Nursing. Also, serving at Providence was David Minter, a Presbyterian minister's son and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, who came as physician to the community. All had served earlier at Hillhouse. Both Cox and Minter had met their spouses while working in the Delta.[327]

Interestingly, the land, known from earliest times as Providence Farm, had a Presbyterian connection. The plantation had belonged to Samuel Donnell Gwin, the father-in-law of the Rev. J. B. Hutton, the longtime pastor of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church. (Hutton had served at Lexington and Durant prior to his pastorate in Jackson.) He married Gwin's daughter Irene in 1895.

Secular problems overshadowed the work at Providence Farm. The Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawing public school segregation, recognized to have implications far beyond the separation of African Americans and whites in public schools, caused Mississippians to draw racial lines even more firmly than before. In Holmes County, Minter and Cox operated the cooperative farm as well as a medical clinic for the county's rural poor, both Black and white—the only clinic of its kind in the area. By 1954, the project had operated in the state for 17 years. Yet soon after the *Brown* decision, trouble involving Providence Farm brought direct involvement with the local Presbyterian Church in a series of events that brought the Holmes County project to an end.

In September 1955, a teenaged white girl told her school bus driver that several African American youths had whistled at her while she was waiting for the bus. The driver informed the sheriff, and the four youths were brought in for questioning. An African American, under interrogation by whites, confirmed rumors of "inter-racial swimming" on the property. A meeting was called three nights later at the Tchula High School. Local leaders hauled Minter and Cox before a crowd of 500 that included two state legislators, several lawyers, and other "leading people." As Smith recounted events,

> The questions had less to do with whistling at the girl than they did with the activities down there at Providence Farm. Intimidated and terrified (after all, Emmett Till had just been found murdered not far away), the boys' answers to extremely prejudicial and leading questions were recorded on tape. Because the tape-recorded answers 'proved' that the people at Providence were promoting social equality, advocating racial integration, and countenanced interracial swimming, the community leaders, especially the local prosecutor, state representative, and White Citizens' Council, felt that the community should be made aware of such 'goings on.'[328]

The Assembly listened to taped recordings of the persons interviewed. Cox and Minter were also questioned by the audience regarding their views and purpose. A group of white Tchulans voted that Providence Farm "exerted a dangerous and unwholesome influence on the community in general and upon blacks in particular." The throng demanded that Cox and Minter leave the county.[329] The only voice raised in defense of Cox and Minter was the Rev. Marsh Callaway, the 61-year-old pastor of the nearby Durant Presbyterian Church. Callaway was a native of Texas, who had received his education at the University of Texas and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He had served Mississippi pastorates previously at Columbia, Shaw, Benoit, and Rosedale. He had come to Durant from the Delta earlier in 1955. As the accusations against the workers at Providence Farm became more and more heated, Callaway rose to speak. He stated that he knew little of the activities of Providence Farm, but that he knew the family of Dr. Minter. He stated that Minter's father was a Presbyterian minister; his brother had been

[327] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 237, 262, 268-69; Will D. Campbell, *Providence* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1992): 14.
[328] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 269.
[329] Campbell, *Providence*, 7.

a missionary to the Far East and was then a Presbyterian pastor in Texas. His sister was currently a missionary nurse in Africa, married to a medical missionary. Minter himself was a deacon in the Tchula Presbyterian Church.

Callaway took issue with the playing of the tape recording before the Assembly on the ground that it had been obtained under duress from the four young men who had been arrested. He protested the methods the Assembly was using. He said, "Gentlemen, I am sorry that you are taking this action. I've known David Minter for 29 years and it's not Christian, it's not American." He was then shouted down.

One man called out, "This ain't no Christian meeting, brother." The Citizens' Council launched an investigation into the cooperative farms.[330] Callaway's appeal on behalf of Providence Farm transferred the crowd's anxieties and prejudice to him. The crowd booed, and he was soon asked to resign by the session of the Durant Church. The matter was covered by *The Presbyterian Outlook*. The paper quoted an anonymous minister serving a church nearby who stated that the issue was not race, but the socialism espoused by Sherwood Eddy and others at Providence Farm. The minister stated that although Minter was a deacon in the Tchula Church, he was considered, "not acceptable to the Presbyterian Church." The minister advised that, "It is not healthy for him to remain."

Callaway appealed the matter to Central Mississippi Presbytery. The presbytery handled the matter in executive session—a highly unusual action. His supporters noted that Calloway had been accused of "no doctrinal errors or moral defects, or even departures from the social practices of the South." Meanwhile, the Durant congregation boycotted services. It took the presbytery several months to adjudicate the situation, and during this time, Callaway delivered sermons with no member of the congregation present other than his wife. The presbytery could not compel the congregation to support its pastor, but neither did it offer Callaway strong support. The Commission on the Minister and His Work eventually recommended that Callaway's pastoral relation with the Durant Church be dissolved. Once the matter was concluded, he accepted a call to a church in Good Hope, Louisiana and spent the rest of his active ministry in that state.[331]

These events ended the work at Providence Farm. The incident was largely forgotten until it was explored by author Will D. Campbell, the former Baptist chaplain at the University of Mississippi during the Meredith crisis, long interested in the pursuit of civil rights and racial justice. Studies by Jerry Dallas, Tony Dunbar, and Fred C. Smith shed additional light upon the Delta and Providence Farm operations and provided further insight into the lessons learned by those who conducted the two remarkable social and agricultural experiments.[332]

New Congregations for African American Presbyterians

Most African Americans affiliated with the PCUS through its segregated synods and presbyteries lived in rural areas. Recognizing the movement of people away from farms to more urban settings during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, there was interest across the PCUS in organizing congregations for African Americans in towns and cities. The white presbyteries would provide the initial impetus, and after the congregation was organized, it would be ceded to a segregated presbytery. North Mississippi Presbytery pursued such evangelistic work with fervor, establishing several new congregations among the area's African American populace in this period. Area Presbyterians undertook work in 1933 with a small Black congregation, Westminster Church, in Holly Springs. The effort was not successful, but later, the Central Presbytery began congregations in Greenville, Itta Bena, and Jackson. East Mississippi Presbytery undertook work in Okolona, as well as other locations. The Meridian Presbytery supported efforts for similar work in Hattiesburg.

[330] Campbell, *Providence*, 16.

[331] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 20, 1955): 112; *Presbyterian Outlook* 40 (October 24, 1955): 8; Campbell, 16-17.

[332] Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen*, 268-74; Anthony P. Dunbar, *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929-1959* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981); Dallas, "The Delta and Providence Cooperative Farms," 283-308.

Questions of Church Union Were Bound Up with Race

The PCUS General Assembly held at Meridian in 1938 considered the question of Presbyterian union. Elder W. Calvin Wells served as the Synod of Mississippi's representative to this committee. His appointment was strategic, for the synod took care to see that opponents of union represented it on the denominational committees that dealt with such matters. Wells served on the reunion committee until 1945, after which the synod elected the Rev. G. T. Gillespie, president of Belhaven, as his successor.[333]

Quiet discussions continued in the succeeding years. The committee reported to the 1939 Assembly that it and the corresponding committee representing the U.S.A. Church looked with favor upon a union that would embrace the *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, along with the U.S.A. Church's 1913 *Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith*, provision for reorganized synods, a united General Assembly, and an agreement to maintain the segregated Snedecor Memorial Synod of the PCUS for its African American presbyteries and congregations. The Assembly asked the presbyteries to study the proposal and offer comments.

A controversy of pamphlets ensued as the Rev. Dunbar Ogden Sr., a union supporter, collected articles from *The Christian Observer* and published them under the title, *Reunion of the Presbyterian Churches, U.S.A. and U. S.* Then, in February 1940, Wells and others published "A Letter from Ruling Elders to the Ruling Elders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States." It summed the views of those who opposed union with the U.S.A. Church. Among other things, it noted what some perceived as "agitation" by that body on the subject of race, as had happened in 1938 when the U.S.A. Church's Board of National Missions had urged the passage of an anti-lynching bill that would have added federal authority to the enforcement of state laws—a measure that white Southern legislators had long resisted in the name of "states' rights."

Addressing "the race question," the Letter to the Ruling Elders said that, "We know that the situation is filled with difficulty," and urged that, "We must keep our hands free to settle it as our judgment, here on the ground, deem[s] wise and best and right." The elders warned other Southern Presbyterians that, "You cannot afford to let control of the best way to handle this question pass from you" to others "who may not understand." Writing as individuals and not under authority of any church court, the men could step outside the boundaries of the Spirituality of the Church to address this secular matter among the various church matters that also concerned them. The letter, addressed to elders, grew out of a growing conservative conviction, related perhaps to a growing suspicion of the teaching in denominational seminaries, that ministers were more likely than laymen to support liberal ideas. Such conservatives hoped to rally laymen to oppose their own pastors against ideas the conservatives considered unsound.[334]

At the 1940 Assembly, it was learned that 45 presbyteries wished that the Permanent Committee on Cooperation and Union be continued, while 29 were opposed. Another ten asked that the committee focus only on cooperation. Following the will of the majority, the committee continued its work, and three years later, the Permanent Committee on Cooperation and Union presented a first draft of a proposed Plan of Union. It was sent back to the committee for a year and in 1944 submitted to the presbyteries for study and comment.[335] A report in *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* on December 15, 1945, set forth the Continuing Church Committee's objections to the proposed Plan for Reunion with the U.S.A. Church on the grounds of doctrine, changed status in the office

[333] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1938): 56; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (September 4, 1945); "Reports to the General Assembly," *Christian Observer* (May 11, 1938): 6; See W. Calvin Wells, "Church Union," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 2 (April 1944): 7-18; cf. "A Letter from Ruling Elders to the Ruling Elders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," *Christian Observer* 28 (February 28, 1940): 15. The letter is signed by Wells; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:561-62; Sean Michael Lucas, *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2015): 137-45.

[334] "A Letter from Ruling Elders to the Ruling Elders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," *The Christian Observer* in (February 28, 1940): 15.

[335] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1940): 66; "General Assembly Proceedings," *Christian Observer* (May 29, 1940): 18-19; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1943): 61; (1944): 79.

of ruling elder, ordination of women, regional (instead of state) synods, church property, ecumenical alliances, as well as "social, political and racial problems."[336]

This period also saw calls to rethink the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church.[337] With the exception of the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy, no theological concept was held with such ardor by conservative 20th century Mississippi Presbyterians as the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church. As civil rights historian Carolyn Renée Dupont has observed, "Whether among the professional classes in Jackson's elegant churches or among rural folk in simple sanctuaries, Mississippians embraced a faith that emphasized personal salvation and a strict individual morality; it highlighted an obligation to bring the Gospel to a lost world and rested on a very high regard for the Bible as the inspired Word of God. . . . Since all humanity desperately needed this salvation evangelicals claimed a mandate to bring the Gospel to all peoples, and this obligation defined their labors. . . . Every human need remained secondary to this spiritual concern." Sin was held to reside in people, not in the configuration of society around them. Mississippi churches in this era stressed their common beliefs, resulting in an almost-united front among the larger Protestant bodies.[338]

As William B. Sweetser Jr. has remarked: "Southern Presbyterians justified the spirituality of the church on the foundation of *jure divino* Presbyterianism, first set forth in the Second Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland (1581). The theory of this divine-law Presbyterianism rested on the belief that God had set forth his law for the church in his infallible Word. The Church had an obligation to teach and do all that was commanded by Scripture; it was implicitly forbidden to teach or do anything that was not commanded, or that could not be drawn from it by deduction. In this way a 'pure' Church, speaking the Word of God, would purify society."[339] Such ideas were given vigorous expression in the decades leading to the Civil War by the revered South Carolina Presbyterian theologian James Henley Thornwell, who wrote that the Church "is not a moral institute of universal good, whose business it is to wage war upon every form of human ill. . . . It has no commission to construct society afresh . . . to change the forms of its political constitutions. . . . The problems, which the anomalies of our fallen state are continually forcing on philanthropy, the Church has no right directly to solve." The Church, he insisted, "is a spiritual body," and it was not the business of the Church to build asylums for the insane, or to promote temperance societies, or to serve as "a contrivance for every species of reform—individual, social, [or] political." Indeed, wrote Thornwell, "The Church . . . has a fixed and unalterable Constitution; and that Constitution is the Word of God. . . . She can announce what it teaches, enjoin what it commands, prohibit what it condemns. . . . Beyond the Bible she can never go, and apart from the Bible she can never speak." Indeed, as Thornwell wrote in his article, "The Church and Slavery," where the texts are silent, "it is her duty to put her finger on her lips." In the "Address to All the Churches of Jesus Christ Throughout the Earth," adopted at the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States, he said that the state was "designed to realize the idea of justice. It is the society of rights." The Church, on the other hand, was "designed to realize the idea of grace. It is the society of the redeemed." Church and state "are as planets moving in different orbits, and unless each is confined to its own track, the consequences may be as disastrous in the moral world, as the collision of different spheres in the world of matter."[340]

The ideas surrounding the Church's isolation from secular affairs were reinforced by other Southern Presbyterian thinkers, particularly, R. L. Dabney, as well as John B. Adger, John L. Girardeau, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, and Thomas E. Peck. Most significantly, they were written into the PCUS *Book of Church Order*. Some thought

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[336] "Continuing Church Committee Holds Meet in Atlanta," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 4 (December 15, 1945): 5-6; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:564.

[337] See "'Spirituality' Reinterpreted," in E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:504-29.

[338] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 21.

[339] William B. Sweetser Jr., *A Copious Fountain: A History of Union Presbyterian Seminary, 1812-2012* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2016): 165.

[340] John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau, eds., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, 4 vols. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1871-73): 2:47; 382-84; 4:384; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCCSA, 1861): 1:52-53.

all other denominations had strayed from the gospel truth of the "Non-Secular Character of the Church," as Union Seminary professor Thomas Cary Johnson put it. Indeed, PCUS conservatives believed that the U.S.A. Church, "had been engaged in a fatal embrace with politics since 1861." They claimed that the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church was a distinctive doctrine of the PCUS, fully justifying the denomination's separate existence. Yet as John H. Leith wrote, "The doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church was easily confused with indifference to or retreat from the problems of society." The doctrine, as originally constituted, did not forbid the Church from identifying social problems or advocating for reform. It did not forbid calling upon its members and the wider society to apply the great principles of the Christian religion to correct blatant wrongdoing in public life or to improve specific situations involving individuals, whether they be Christian or not. Thus, wrote Thornwell, "The Church, has no hesitation in cordially approving of abstinence from intoxicating drinks as a matter of Christian expediency, according to the words of the Apostle in Romans 16:21," but the Church could not go beyond the proclamation of the Word of God.

Temperance societies and philanthropic causes, as well as moral reform movements, could be encouraged but could not operate as agencies of the Church. As Leith observed, "Thornwell insisted on the spiritual character of the Church, but he did not isolate Christian faith from public life." Thornwell, in fact, with other Southern Presbyterians of his time preached sermons on topics such as the duties of owners toward their slaves. Moreover, the Church's ongoing involvement with churches and schools indicated that its work was seen as more than preaching for the conversion of souls.[341]

Sweetser has written that,

> A belief in southern particularism, strict confessionalism, biblical inerrancy, and opposition to modernity incubated the theology of 'the spirituality of the church.' Although first advocated by Thornwell as early as the 1850s, it was Dabney who made the Spirituality of the Church emblematic of southern theology. The doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church held that the civil and ecclesiastical spheres of life were absolutely separate, to the point that one could have no comment on the other. Civil rights, for example, was considered political and therefore outside the boundaries of Church pronouncements. It was thought that Christians, hearing the Word of God rightly preached every Sunday, would make up their own minds and institute godly policies.

Sweetser believed "the doctrine depended on "a worldview wedded to an agricultural, rural, and hierarchical mind-set."[342] By historian Jack Maddex's lights, James H. Thornwell never intended his doctrine to mean that churches could not "address the state" or endorse or condemn the programs of the surrounding society. Maddex argued, however, that following the Civil War, this was exactly how Southern Presbyterians came to understand Thornwell's position. With the crushing defeat of the Confederacy—the cause so many Southerners believed had been ordained by Providence—Presbyterians were less inclined to invoke divine sanction for human politics. The Southern Church's 1865 Assembly stated that only as "a spiritual kingdom," independent of politics, could the Church survive the fall of earthly regimes. Thus, as Maddex argued, by selectively drawing on the writings of Thornwell and his pupils, theologian Dabney, of Virginia's Union Seminary and preacher Benjamin M. Palmer, of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, articulated a revised doctrine of the Church's spirituality, casting it as one of the distinctives of the PCUS—a distinctive which fully justified its existence as a communion related to but separate from other Reformed bodies.[343] The conservative Princeton scholar Gresham Machen

[341] Adger and Girardeau, 4:471; John H. Leith, "James Henley Thornwell and the Shaping of the Reformed Tradition in the South" (Lancaster, S.C.: privately published, 1983): 23-24; cf. John H. Leith, "James Henley Thornwell and the Shaping of the Reformed Tradition in the South," in Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong, eds. *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989); Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 442-43.

[342] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 165, 221.

[343] Maddex, "From Theocracy to Spirituality," 438-57.

famously broke ranks with fellow conservatives on the ground of Christian liberty opposing Church advocacy of prohibition legislation—advocacy that most Mississippi Presbyterians supported. It was a rare foray of Mississippi conservatives into a societal arena. But as Dupont noted, "Religion gave white Mississippians few conceptual tools for understanding the reciprocal truth: that collective sins could create insurmountable individual problems," and in time, the doctrine of the Church's spirituality came to mean that not merely that the Church could not act in the public sphere, but that also, it should not speak to the broader culture. By the 1940s, Mississippi conservatives were asking far more of the doctrine than it was originally designed to teach.[344]

All knew that once the PCUS acknowledged "sin . . . in the social life," it would be but a matter of time before it addressed racial discrimination and other matters that challenged conservative Southerners. As E. T. Thompson wrote, "Southern Presbyterian ministers preached the evangelical gospel convicting men of sin, pointing them to Christ, confirming them in the faith, comforting them in sorrow, strengthening them for the battles of life, setting before them high personal ideals, planting seeds which would bring forth 'the fruit of the Spirit,' but not a gospel which pricked the conscience regarding the deeply entrenched wrongs of Southern society. The Southern Presbyterian minister was expected to ignore the growing Jim Crow mentality, child labor, [voter] disenfranchisement, and lynchings—thus to preach 'a dateless religion, one that is the same yesterday, today and forever.'"[345]

Movement for a Conservative PCUS Paper

Conservatives in the PCUS, particularly those who opposed union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. felt increasingly isolated, particularly in the editorial columns of the official denominational publication, *The Presbyterian Survey.* Thus, following the longstanding tradition of independent journalism in religious circles, a new publication was begun. Conservatives had discussed the possibility of a new paper for six years, and after the 1941 Assembly, a group gathered in Montreat to lay definite plans. One who was approached to be its editor was a Mississippi native, former Columbia Seminary president, the Rev. John Miller Wells. Wells declined, and the Rev. Henry B. Dendy and elder L. Nelson Bell, the esteemed former China missionary and father-in-law of evangelist Billy Graham, both residents of western North Carolina, assumed the task. Both had many friends among the conservative Presbyterians of Mississippi.

As time went on the newly established *Southern Presbyterian Journal* came to rival *The Presbyterian Survey* for influence among PCUS members. It was early reported that *The Survey* claimed 288,000 subscribers and *The Journal*, about 45,000. But *Journal* subscriptions were concentrated in certain regions, building strength for the Southern conservative cause. Some years later, it was noted that only 5% of Mississippi Presbyterians subscribed to *The Survey.* Meanwhile, Mississippians brought their own influence to *The Journal*. H. S. Williford, an elder in Jackson's First Church, served 15 years as a member of *The Journal's* advisory board. *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* (in 1959 renamed *The Presbyterian Journal*), sustained an offensive against PCUS endorsements of social change, particularly racial integration.

Stephen R. Haynes, a professor in Rhodes College at Memphis, has written that *The Journal* counted among its goals, combating liberalism within the PCUS, defending the "integrity of the scriptures," opposing the NCC (which some in the PCUS alleged aided communism and atheism) and blocking union with the U.S.A. Church. During the 1950s and early 1960s, Haynes said, "*The Journal* could be relied upon to oppose virtually any PCUS pronouncement on race relations." It did so, not by denying the reality of African American suffering, but by proposing that, from a Christian point of view, "The black man's plight is identical to that of the white man. *Both* need Jesus Christ." What was needed was individual conversion to Christ, which would then bring harmony between the races.

In 1949, the Committee on Social and Moral Welfare declared that American minorities' claims to full civil rights have a "sound moral and historical basis." Longtime Davidson College president Walter L. Lingle and his

[344] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 229, 21-22, 36.

[345] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:358-59.

Union Seminary colleague Ernest Trice Thompson had spearheaded efforts to move their denomination away from a limiting view of spirituality and toward a vision of Christianity that included social reform. Among such efforts, in 1944, Thompson and others launched *The Presbyterian Outlook* as a counterweight to *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, a conservative effort that began publication in 1942. Conservative Mississippi Presbyterians were alert to this challenge and opposed Thompson and his growing company of allies across the PCUS.[346]

Mississippi Presbyterians Debated Personal Piety *Versus* Social Responsibility

World War II brought unprecedented opportunity to Mississippi's Black population. Not only did many sharecroppers migrate to Northern cities seeking factory work, but others were drafted into the military, joining the fight for democracy and freedom abroad—all the while realizing that these were in short supply in their own lives. As a result, African Americans became increasingly restless under prevailing conditions.

James C. Cobb has remarked that, "America's racial winds had clearly started to shift even before World War II." During the 1930s, the NAACP had pushed the U. S. Supreme Court to revisit the "separate but equal" doctrine introduced in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, using at first a strategy to force Southern states to live up at least to what that doctrine purported to require. Small steps were taken to eliminate discrimination, as when President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order outlawing discrimination in industries engaged in armaments manufacture.[347] But the matter of race and racial equality also reverberated through the churches.

Presbyterians North and South debated the relation of personal religion and the Church's responsibility in wider questions of social ethics. Most did not make an absolute distinction. In the 1930s and '40s, leaders such as E. T. Thompson brought the subject to the attention of PCUS readers, but the question had received perhaps its most moving expression in the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch, a member of the American (Northern) Baptist Convention who taught at the influential Rochester Theological Seminary in New York State. His books *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917) not only influenced many in the PCUS, but also figures such as civil rights leader, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the South African bishop Desmond Tutu.

Most conservatives saw the Bible's teaching primarily from an individual standpoint and defined the Church's mission accordingly. They argued that Paul did not condemn slavery but worked for the conversion of master and slave. The heavenly dimension was what mattered. When all were converted, societal tensions would resolve themselves. These evangelicals believed that the single great task of the Church was to bring about the redemption of the individual through conversion and faith in the Jesus Christ. Moreover, many conservatives read the Hebrew prophets primarily to find instances of prophecy fulfilled in the coming of the messiah. They interpreted the words of the prophets in the Old Testament directed toward the nations of Israel and Judah and quoted in the New with reference to Christ and the kingdom he came to build in terms of individual, personal morality. The PCUS Assembly's Committee on Social and Moral Welfare also affirmed the "historic position of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, that the power of the Church is exclusively spiritual," but also denied that "*every* effort of the church should concentrate on the individual." In other words, the amelioration of social ills could also be a spiritual exercise.[348]

The Southern Presbyterian Journal asserted that the New Testament word "*gospel*" did not mean "Christian ethics." "It is not morality." According to *The Journal*, the gospel was not "social righteousness." The gospel, closely defined, dealt with the forgiveness of sins through personal trust in Christ. The correction of social ills flowed from this, so that social righteousness "and many other things are the fruits of the Gospel." L. Nelson Bell and many other writers spoke for PCUS conservatives when they argued that once individuals came into a personal

[346] See Ernest Trice Thompson, *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961).

[347] Cobb, *The South and America Since World War* II, 1.

[348] *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (December 15, 1947): 3; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1947): 166-67.

relationship with Christ, solutions for wider problems would follow. Personal evangelism, not pronouncements on "social matters," was the pressing need of the Church.[349]

The Presbyterian Outlook, on the other hand, asserted that Christianity's mission had to do "with society as well as with the individual." It stated that the principle of "the separation of church and state" did not prevent ecclesiastical organizations "from denouncing injustice, dishonesty, oppression, greed, and exploitation in any area of human life and social relations." It bemoaned the failure of the PCUS and others, "to face the issues of the day, chief of which in the South is the racial issue."[350]

Citing the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and the apostles, the General Assembly's Committee on Moral and Social Welfare argued that the Bible called not only for "conversion of individuals but conversion of a social order." Its report praised the term "social gospel" and found the concept "firmly rooted" in the "scriptures themselves." As Moses condemned the slave system of Pharaoh, as Isaiah and Amos rebuked Judah and Israel for their national sins, as John the Baptist denounced "hypocrisy and iniquity in high places," as Jesus resisted the corruption of the Pharisees, so much should the Church be a "prophetic voice of power" against injustice in the existing order. Thus, it would fulfill its command to "teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). *The Presbyterian Outlook* cited Peter's experiences with the Gentiles to demonstrate that God did not want racial prejudice "to interfere with the full expression of Christian brotherhood."[351]

In 1950, *The Journal* published medical and cultural arguments put forward by former Belhaven president William H. Frazer, to show that segregation was a kindness to Black and white alike. He said, "We believe in the 'social separation' of the races because we think that God believes in it," and despite the fact the paper emphatically believed in a literal interpretation of the creation account in Genesis, which, of course, denied human evolution, the article endorsed a form of Social Darwinism—despite the embrace of such ideas by the then-defunct German Nazi regime. The article stated that racial intermarriage would weaken resistance "to certain diseases by hybrid offspring." Seeking to ground his assertions in scriptural teaching, Frazer argued that one reason God brought about the Hebrew exodus from Egypt was to maintain "the purity of the Jewish race," though as Sean Michael Lucas later noted, Moses had married a Midianite woman.[352]

Beginning in the 1920s, the Federal Council of Churches began the tradition of designating a Sunday each February as "Race Relations Sunday," but a survey of PCUS pastors in 1954 found none responding from Mississippi who observed the day. The Rev. Horace Villee, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, said his church neglected the observance because Southerners had "little consciousness of a real 'race problem'" and because he personally had never thought of Black Mississippians as persons "with whom some proper relations must be achieved."[353]

The Rev. J. David Simpson, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Newton, Mississippi, wrote in 1948 that "non-segregation means eventual inter-marriage," asking what would happen if white young people had to bear the "cross and burden" of "resisting and repelling every natural urge of affection ripening into the desire for marriage between the negro [*sic*] and white as the years go by." He said, "Non-segregation of the races is to my mind unscriptural; whereas segregation of the races is to my mind definitely scriptural."[354]

For its part, the Central Mississippi Presbytery took issue with any and all religious organizations that advocated religious responsibility for social ills. Thus, "After full discussion . . . [the presbytery] defeated a motion

[349] L. Nelson Bell, "What is the Gospel?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 5 (August 1, 1946): 3.

[350] *Presbyterian Outlook* 79 (August 11, 1947): 8; 80 (March 8, 1948): 8; 83 (July 16, 1951): 5.

[351] *Presbyterian Outlook* 80 (February 2, 1948): 8.

[352] William H. Frazer, "The Social Separation of the Races," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 9 (July 15, 1950): 6-7; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 115.

[353] Dupont, *Mississippi* Praying, 32.

[354] J. David Simpson, "Non-Segregation Means Eventual Inter-Marriage," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (March 15, 1948): 6-7.

requesting our Church to remain in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America by a 16 to 30 vote. A motion to advise withdrawal of our Church from the Federal Council was then carried by the same margin."[355]

Hattiesburg editor and Presbyterian elder, Leonard E. Faulkner underscored this opposition. He contributed an article to *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* condemning the Federal Council for supporting President Truman's ten-point civil rights program. He urged the PCUS to withdraw from the Federal Council, which had urged passage of legislation to make lynching a federal crime.[356]

Faulkner sent a dozen or more mimeographed letters to General Assembly commissioners over the years. He termed the Federal Council, "one of the most powerful enemies of business and professional men because so many of their objectives were contrary to the competitive enterprise system." He charged that the council and other groups were identified with Communist-front organizations. In this, he was supported by Jackson attorney Chalmers W. Alexander, an elder in the city's First Presbyterian Church, who wrote in 1947 that membership in the Federal Council should be opposed on the ground that it favored fair-employment legislation, a non-segregated society, the increase of the minimum wage, labor's right to strike, special planning and control of the nation's credit and monetary systems, as well as pacifism.[357]

In the March 21, 1949, issue of *The Presbyterian Outlook*, E. T. Thompson published a Bible study arguing that racism was unbiblical. He reviewed passages from Genesis through 1 John, highlighting texts seen in the popular mind to support segregation and racial superiority. He summed the argument against racism, citing Jesus' command, "to love . . . thy neighbor as thyself,"—adding the words, "including the Negro." Based on this urging, as well as from others, the Assembly's Christian Relations Committee asserted in 1949 that the concept of "states' rights," represented a "right to do something" about racial injustice, not "the right to do nothing."[358]

During World War II, measures had been introduced in the PCUS Assembly that called upon Christian citizens "to combat, with all earnestness and power, racial superiority against Negro." In 1946, the Assembly created a Division of Christian Relations to deal with racial issues. But the Church's complicity in segregation muted its calls for justice. Its tiny African American minority—less than half of one percent of total PCUS membership—remained administratively and physically segregated. Until 1950, African American commissioners to the Assembly at Montreat were required to enter through a back door and eat at separate tables. That year, as the Assembly met at Massanetta Springs, the Synod of Virginia's conference center, measures were introduced to abolish the Church's all-Black synods. This was a move with great symbolic impact—and one that would be strenuously opposed by Mississippi conservatives.[359]

During the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, leaders who agreed with *The Outlook*'s position came to have ever-greater influence in the PCUS. Several presbyteries and synods appointed their own committees on social and moral welfare. For example, the Synods of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina passed resolutions calling for better educational and employment opportunities for African Americans, also protesting lynchings and the Ku Klux Klan. The Synod of Alabama approved a detailed report put forward by its Committee on Christian Relations in 1950, calling for major changes in race relations. It stated that, "We are faced with two inevitables, the federal constitution and the Christian conscience. Both dictate that legal segregation shall not last forever."[360]

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[355] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 20, 1948): 672.

[356] L. E. Faulkner, "Official Pronouncements of the Federal Council of Churches," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (April 1, 1948): 17-19.

[357] Citations from E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:554.

[358] E. T. Thompson, "Jesus Among the People of Other Races," *Presbyterian Outlook* 81 (March 21, 1949): 14; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1949): 187-89.

[359] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 54.

[360] See Dwyn M. Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1944-1954," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 48 (Winter 1970): 52-53; John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Knopf, 1994); Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); *Presbyterian Outlook* 131 (October 16, 1950).

Later, those who resisted theological change or union with the U.S.A. Church would declare that as a result, in the support for the social gospel and racial integration, the die was cast toward the eventual division of the PCUS, and union opponents, rallied by *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, called on those agreeing with its aims to do everything possible to organize a "continuing church" if and when the "inevitable" union with the PCUSA should occur. Members of the Central Mississippi Presbytery were closely involved in that effort.

Toward a Vote on Church Union

Discussions about union with other Presbyterian bodies gained renewed momentum in the years following World War II. Debate was animated, led by the rival *Presbyterian Outlook* and *Southern Presbyterian Journal*. But the rising generation seemed increasingly ready to embrace reunion.[361] Aware of this trend, opponents of reunion redoubled their efforts. The Continuing Church Committee met each summer after 1945 in conjunction with the annual *Presbyterian Journal* Day, to discuss its work. Along with questions of race, theological issues, and the relation of the Church to political matters, the Continuing Church Committee identified PCUS participation in the Federal Council of Churches as an ongoing issue of concern. Continuing Church Committee publications indicated that this opposition arose because "Through the years [the Federal Council had] declared doctrinal beliefs and convictions seriously at variance with those views held sacred to the Southern Presbyterian Church." According to the committee, it had promoted economic views that were "basically Socialistic and, if developed and accomplished as now proposed," would destroy "the very foundations of Free Enterprise and Constitutional Government." In particular, it had urged "the elimination of all racial segregation," a plan the Continuing Church Committee believed to be "both unwise and improper."[362]

The members of the Central Mississippi Presbytery were not of one mind on this or other issues. Many opposed union with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., but others such as the Revs. T. Russell Nunan of Greenville and Robert S. Woodson of Starkville, voiced support. But, as evidenced by this resolution that was presented by Major W. Calvin Wells of Jackson's First Church and adopted 29 to 11, the majority sentiment was to defer all action on the Proposed Plan of Union. Wells's overture, offered as a substitute for one put forward by a committee headed by Nunan and Woodson, declared, "The negotiations with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which have continued for a period of ten years have revealed fundamental differences in doctrine, polity and practice between these two great sister churches," that, "it is now evident that the Proposed Plan of Reunion has aroused such widespread criticism and opposition in the Southern Church that unless radically amended or changed it has little or no chance of receiving the approval of three-fourths of the presbyteries," and that, "the continued agitation and discussion of this matter in the present state of the public mind promises not only to accentuate these differences, but to overshadow all other questions before the church and to demoralize and disrupt the whole promotional program of the church."

Race again flared as an alleged difference between the two communions, as Columbia Seminary professor William Childs Robinson argued. Writing in *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, March 15, 1946, he said objections from Northern Presbyterians to a clause in the Plan of Union allowing for separate presbyteries and synods of African American Presbyterians were misplaced, stating that, "I object strongly [to] U.S.A. 'liberals,' who do not have the Negro question as acutely before them as we do, deciding how we shall handle this thorny

[361] James Hastings Nichols and John T. McNeill, *Ecumenical Testimony: The Concern for Christian Unity Within the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974): 147; W. Stanley Rycroft, *The Ecumenical Witness of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1968): 147.

[362] "The Findings of the Annual Meeting of the Continuing Church Committee," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (September 1, 1947): 3; "Statement from the Atlanta Meeting," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 8 (July 15, 1949): 12B.

matter." Robinson added that, "If they are free now to say that we must have them [Negroes] in our presbyteries and synods, they will be free after the merger to say that we must have them in our congregations."[363]

As a vote drew near in the 1950s, opposition to union crystallized across the PCUS. Various organizations advocating and discouraging union multiplied, so that there soon were at least three groups within the Southern Church that pledged to defeat any proposed merger and form a "continuing" PCUS. These were *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, the Continuing Church Committee, and a Memphis group, the Association for the Preservation of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

In the summer of 1952, former Belhaven president, the Rev. W. H. Frazer penned a widely cited article, "Why I Favor Preserving the Southern Presbyterian Church." At a meeting in Montreat in the summer of 1953, the three groups opposed to church union made common cause, employed a traveling agent, and sought to organize those sharing their views, concentrating upon elders rather than ministers, as ministers were believed to be more liberal in their theology and social views.[364]

It was clear that, for many Mississippians, the question of Presbyterian union had not yet ripened to the point of decision. The matter was fraught with related concerns, and the state's unhappy racial situation did not make a resolution of the debate any easier. In a highly conservative corner of the Church, change itself was suspect, and as the second half of the century went forward, additional fears—among them communism and federal action on civil rights—would intrude to make the matter all the more complicated. It was not likely that a solution could be brought forward that would be pleasing to all. The succeeding decades would show that the PCUS was riven by suspicion, distrust, hurt feelings, and clashing agendas. An important segment of the denomination's conservative constituency was concentrated in Mississippi, and conservative leaders in the state gave significant leadership to its efforts.

A Land of Discontent

Civil rights historians have written that in the aftermath of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling, white Mississippians became obsessed with the preservation of all types of social orthodoxy. John Dittmer said that the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* school integration decision compelled segregationists to develop "a siege mentality so pervasive it encompassed virtually every citizen and institution." As the communist scare was declining in the rest of the country, Dittmer explained that, "A homegrown McCarthyism took hold in the Magnolia State. Books were banned, speakers censored, and network television programs cut off in mid-sentence."[365] The Second World War had brought rapid, extraordinary change to Mississippi. The state's population had increased, but as a share of overall church membership, it now had many fewer Presbyterians. Other groups, particularly Southern Baptists, had developed ways of attracting and incorporating larger and larger shares of the state's citizens into their membership. More people were prosperous, but many left to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Meanwhile, the nation had been aroused by a growing fear of communism and the growing nuclear power of the Soviet Union. These trends only accelerated with the outbreak of the Korean War. The sudden attack of South Korea by well-equipped communists served to confirm America's worst fears. Though the 1950s were later remembered as a placid time, matters were brewing in important areas of church and society that would soon rise to the level of a crisis. In many ways, the church in Mississippi served as a barometer for the rapid changes soon to emerge.

The Presbyterian Church, as a denominational body, had come to be noted for its collective wealth and

[363] William Childs Robinson, "Are the U.S.A. Liberals to Determine the Terms of Union?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 4 (March 15, 1946): 5.

[364] W. H. Frazer, "Why I Favor Preserving the Southern Church," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 11 (July 23, 1952): 7; cf. similar articles in the same publication (April 26 and May 2, 1972) by a later Belhaven president, the Rev. R. McFerran Crowe; see E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:579.

[365] John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994): 58; Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992): 145-98.

privilege, as an enclave of well-educated, middle-class respectability, and for the influence this status provided. Both locally and as a denomination, many Presbyterians felt they must promote social stability, which in turn posed a threat to their own survival. Many believed that if America fell to foreign domination, it would be due to internal subversion—betrayal by Americans professing to be good citizens, but secretly assisting the communists. Conservatives in the PCUS harbored their own suspicions about the motives of liberals in their denomination.

The post-war South was thrust into a period of continued, rapid change, a challenge for which many of its institutions, as well as its churches, were unequipped. As Samuel S. Hill Jr. observed, "Every person, community, and institution was in the process of being permanently altered. So many aspects of life were affected: the economic, the moral, educational, the family, the political, the religious, and the rest." Such situations as those disclosed, in particular, "the entrenchment of racial and interracial customs and laws in the history and the ongoing life of the regional society and culture."[366]

In the years since the Civil War, Southern Presbyterians had been increasingly characterized (and criticized) for their doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church. Even though the General Assembly had, on occasion, "lapsed" into handling of other than spiritual matters, such as its appeals to the civil authorities on behalf of laws enforcing the prohibition of alcohol, the doctrine of the Church's spirituality had come to be regarded as one of the distinctive teachings of the PCUS. This doctrine, intended to lift the Church above all partisan or political debates, often was taken to confine preachers to matters of individual salvation and personal morality. These were important enough, but insightful persons saw that there was more to the gospel than private, personal transformation and knew that the Protestant Reformers, to say nothing of the Puritans, had fearlessly preached against the oppressive rule of kings and despots.

The doctrine had been stridently criticized in an earlier day by thinkers such as the African American writer Frederick Douglass, who condemned "the damning heresy that a man may be a Christian whatever his practice, so long as his creed be right." So also, the theologians of "Old Princeton" had found something lacking in the old PCUS ideal.[367] Many believed the changed world of the mid-20th century called not only for personal consecration, but for united action against societal ills. In matters where a general consensus could be obtained (such as prohibiting gambling, prostitution, or the sale of alcohol), Presbyterians spoke out. But other matters were more difficult. Issues such as racial integration, the ordination of women, and union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (because it spoke positively toward the first two) caused intense debate and struggles of conscience for many Mississippi Presbyterians. Fearful of change and devoted to the received theology, some—even some who later confessed they knew better—resorted to the cover-up and opposition to which John Dittmer referred.

Two ways of dealing with change emerged. In a period that some derisively called "the Second Reconstruction" others, such as Southern Presbyterianism's leading ethicist E. T. Thompson, sought to reappraise and reinterpret the doctrine of the Church's spirituality, so that faith could be lived and applied, "where cross the crowded ways of life." Thompson argued that the tradition of Calvin, Knox, the Puritans, and Witherspoon, far from being conservative, was one of a direct challenge to civil authority, when the demands of spiritual integrity warranted it. The 16th century reformers had not been politically isolationist. Their preaching often had ominous political overtones, as did the sermons of their Reformed successors in every generation. It had not been for nothing that during the American Revolution, the English parliamentary leader Horace Walpole had complained that "Cousin America has run away with a Presbyterian parson."[368] As a result of Thompson's influence and others, the PCUS as a denomination increasingly moved from a defensive posture to one that advocated social and societal change. The course was of necessity controversial, and while it occasioned constructive engagement, it was at times criticized even by its most loyal proponents. Criticism of the PCUS from many of its Mississippi adherents was intense, and one of

366 Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, xxxii.

367 Frederic Holland, *Frederick Douglass: The Colored Orator* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1895): 123.

368 See William H. Gardiner, "The Presbyterian Rebellion," *Journal of the American Revolution* (September 5, 2013): *www.allthingsliberty.com/2013/09/presbyterian-rebellion/*

the most intense pressure points was race. Yet, as historian Hill pointed out, "All that conservatives could hope for was to slow down change, but even the prospect of deferring the rearrangement of the racial order was doubtful."[369]

Few white churches were liberal in this period. Rather, most white-controlled churches were divided between those whose members practiced the doctrine Presbyterians called the Spirituality of the Church, certain that they "were called to avoid public matters in favor of authentic (churchly) priorities and those who actively opposed the forces for change that were at work." However, Hill believed that "All parties knew [the civil rights struggle] to be a moral issue, something their God had an investment in." But was one's moral duty to resist or to embrace the changes that granting "civil rights" entailed? Were the changes the work of atheistic communists or the fulfillment of a great gospel hope?[370] Preservers of the old order felt that the Church was their last refuge. A commonly-voiced plea was that "If you cannot have your way in the churches governed by the will of their members, what freedoms are left to you?" As a connectional, conciliar body, ruled by officers elected directly by the people, Presbyterians were left to ponder this question.[371]

As cities grew, so did their Presbyterian churches. For example, in nearby Memphis, the three large Presbyterian congregations—Second, Evergreen, and Idlewild—assembled memberships that would not be matched in succeeding decades. The First Churches in Jackson, Gulfport, Tupelo, Natchez, Greenwood, Greenville, Oxford, and Starkville also thrived. The First Church at Vicksburg, for example, prospered so much that it nurtured a second congregation, set off as Halls Ferry Church (now Westminster Presbyterian) in 1951.[372] Gradual movement to the suburbs began, and although the outlying churches prospered, they never grew to the size that city churches achieved in the 1950s. And while rural churches did not prosper numerically, most churches in the county seat towns reached their peak membership in this period. As the post-war baby boom went forward, churches took pride in the number of infants presented for baptism. Gradual decline set in, especially after 1964, the year PCUS membership in the state reached its peak. Amid all the changes that the civil rights era brought, scholars such as Hill charged that the church was "almost utterly unprepared to minister effectively during the gravest crisis the South had experienced since the Civil War."[373]

An Issue of Love: Mississippi Presbyterians and Civil Rights

As Mississippi pastor and Presbyterian historian John M. Wilson has written, "Mississippians were able to absorb the injuries inflicted by the 1927 flood, and the influenza epidemics, and even the hurt caused by a false economy. The boomerang of earlier rages had hit the outer reaches of its arch in World War I, and there was an anxiety that directed attention to issues of love . . . the world was taking note of how Christians dealt with minorities."[374] In the years after World War II, the issue of civil rights came to the forefront in the Deep South states. The battle against the Nazis, as well as the emergence of the Cold War, threw the American belief that all were created equal into bold relief. The values of the white Southern churches were also called into question. White Southerners found themselves on the defensive.

In a foreword to Mississippi journalist Erle E. Johnston Jr.'s 1990 memoir, *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973*, former governor William F. Winter wrote that,

> Because of the immensity of the change that has taken place in the last 20 years, it is almost impossible at this time for anyone who did not live through the period encompassed by this book to understand

[369] Maddex, "From Theocracy to Spirituality,"438-57; Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, xxxi-xxxii.

[370] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, xxxii.

[371] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, xxxiii; Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-75* (New York: Knoph, 2006).

[372] Robert W. Cunny, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Vicksburg, Mississippi in the Twentieth Century* (Vicksburg: First Presbyterian Church, 2006): 5-7.

[373] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 115.

[374] John M. Wilson, *Monroe Presbyterian Church Sesquicentennial, 1823-1973* (privately published, 1973): 29.

> the political climate in which those events took place. Given the mind-set of most white Southerners to resist change in the racial status quo and the determination of most black Southerners to break down the existing order, it would appear on mature reflection that the most remarkable and largely unappreciated aspect of this story is that the quite revolutionary changes of this period were accomplished primarily by nonviolent means. Admittedly there were tragic acts of violence and tension climaxed by the riot at Ole Miss, the assassination of Medgar Evers, and the murder of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, but for the most part the issues were fought out and ultimately resolved in the courts, in the Congress, and even in the state legislature.[375]

Important work remained for Mississippi Presbyterians. Many would be called to lead their communities in the difficult years ahead. To this end, East Mississippi Presbytery adopted a resolve with regard to race relations, January 12, 1956, "That in these days of transition in racial and cultural patterns, churches and individual church members be urged to lead in demonstrating the Christian graces of compassion, courage, forbearance, and understanding."

White Mississippians, and presumably many Presbyterians, had given their votes to Franklin D. Roosevelt as he ran for President in 1932, 1936, 1940, and 1944. In 1932 and 1940, the state gave him 96% of its popular vote. In 1936, the figure was 97%. In 1944, the figure was 94%. Still, some of the president's words or actions on behalf of African American equality drew criticism, even from some in the church press, as when Roosevelt created by executive order, and on a temporary basis, the Fair Employment Practices Committee.

President Harry S. Truman had in his first term called for civil rights legislation and a federal anti-lynch law, a permanent fair employment practices commission, and for abolition of the poll tax and for elimination racially separate seating rules on interstate trains, planes, and busses. White anxieties grew as Truman created a Committee on Civil Rights, signed an anti-lynching act, and ended segregation in the armed forces. As Erle Johnston remarked, "To the white South, this was blasphemy. While most Southerners deplored lynching, they did not like the idea of a whole community being made responsible for capture and conviction of violators."[376] Truman's actions, as indicated by the 1948 election, in which four states gave their electoral votes to the Dixiecrat Party, meant the beginning of the end of a Solid South, as far as white Democrats were concerned. The same was in principle true, and had been true for some time, in the PCUS. The Southern Church was no longer of one mind about race and other matters.

Race and the Communist "Red Scare"

Then there was the matter of Communism. Communism, as an ideology, espoused atheism as a necessary component of its social construct. Communism also posed a threat to capitalist economics and, in some quarters, critics saw Communist efforts to attract urban Black support for its cause as a reason to defend the Southern system of African American subordination. Mississippians would remember the trials of the Scottsboro Boys in neighboring Alabama where lawyers paid by the Communist Party defended nine young Blacks accused of rape in a decade long saga that began in 1931. The Communist Party also publicized the plight of Willie McGee, a Black man from Laurel, Mississippi, accused in 1945 of raping a white woman. (McGee was convicted and executed in 1951.) Carolyn Renée Dupont noted that "Mississippi's red scare had profound implications for the racial struggle and for Mississippi's religious life in the midst of it. [It] thwarted the religious argument for racial equality [and]

[375] Erle E. Johnston Jr., *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973: An Interpretive Documentary with Personal Experiences* (Forest, Miss.: Lake Harbor Publishers, 1990): xxiii.

[376] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 29.

helped shape attitudes toward outside religious intervention long before it arrived, and . . . disrupted [the state's own] religious life."[377]

In 1948 and 1949, the House Un-American Activities Committee published a series of pamphlets entitled *One Hundred Things You Should Know About Communism*. One brochure suggested that Communists could be found in American life, "in your school, your labor union, your church." The committee even issued a full pamphlet devoted to *Communism and Religion*. It argued that Communists desired to use the clergy as unwitting mouthpieces for their ideology and broadened the realm of suspicion to include organizations such as the YMCA and YWCA. J. Edgar Hoover, the powerful head of the FBI—and a member of Washington's National Presbyterian Church—singled out ministers critical of the U. S. social and economic system. Still, as Dupont noted, the controversy over which sort of religion really bolstered Communism raged furiously in the churches themselves. "Not surprisingly, traditions with the greatest theological diversity seemed to argue about it the most."[378]

Persons were judged guilty by association, and to some, an espousal of racially inclusive views made one virtually a Communist. Many saw Communism primarily as a spiritual force that vied with Christianity for human souls. As the National Council of Churches' *Handbook on Communism* (1962) explained, "Communism sees the source of evil outside of man—in the economic system—and the source of salvation within man—in communism. Christianity finds the source of evil within man himself and the source of salvation outside of man—in God." The NCC recognized that the Marxist-Stalinist dogma required "the kind of absolute allegiance and dedication with passion from its followers that Christians can give only to God."[379]

As fears raised by the Cold War escalated, Americans disagreed about exactly what sort of Christianity best countered the Communist threat. Many Americans accepted the association of Christianity with democracy; conservative Protestants emphasized personal salvation, pursued evangelism as the Church's singular mission, and disavowed involvement in controversial or "political matters." As Dupont has remarked, "In this view, liberal Christianity—which might include religious perspectives ranging from the much-maligned social gospel to modernist or neo-orthodox theologies—did not offer an alternative faith to communism; to the contrary, such faiths represented a first step on the path toward red domination." Conservatives believed that those "who identified a biblical mandate to economic and social equality by championing greater market regulation or by empowering labor" teetered dangerously close to the state-controlled society that was advocated by communist ideology. *Southern Presbyterian Journal* editor, L. Nelson Bell, for example, argued that the scriptural answer to social and economic inequalities contained "no suggestion that the government . . . institute a 'Welfare State . . .' or any other sort of ameliorative or redistributive effort." He advocated personal charity where economic assistance was needed.[380]

Those who advocated social and educational equality for African Americans were accused of communist sympathies. Many in the South adopted the rhetoric, language, and tactics of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy's vigorous and controversial efforts to reveal communist sympathies and influences in the institutions and leaders of American life. In the July 1953 issue of *The American Mercury* entitled, "Reds in Our Churches," J. B. Matthews, an investigator for McCarthy, asserted that, "The largest single group supporting the Communist apparatus in the United States today is composed of Protestant clergymen." He charged that the Rev. John A. Mackay, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, and at the time, moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., was "foremost" among "at least 7,000 Protestant clergymen who were Communist Party members, fellow travelers, espionage agents, party-line adherents, and unwitting dupes." At the 1953 General Assembly of the U.S.A. Church, Mackay had urged a face-to-face encounter with Soviet officials in the hope of bringing about reconciliation and forgiveness, an action that *The Communist Daily Worker* applauded. *The Presbyterian Journal* took note, leading Chalmers W. Alexander, an elder in Jackson's First Church, to urge that conservative believers

[377] Carolyn Renée Dupont, "Black and White and Red All Over: Mississippi's Religious Red Scare" (unpublished typescript, 2014): 4. Used with the author's permission.

[378] Dupont, "Mississippi 's Religious Red Scare," 9-10.

[379] *A Christian's Handbook on Communism* (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1962): 22-23.

[380] Dupont, "Mississippi's Religious Red Scare," 6-7; *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 12 (May 26, 1954): 12.

become "reactionaries," eager to defend the gospel and "the American way of life." Other conservative leaders joined the chorus against Mackay. Among the most vociferous was Carl McIntire, the fiercely anti-communist founder and broadcaster for the small, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based Bible Presbyterian denomination. Many copies of McIntire's *Christian Beacon Magazine* found their way to Mississippians, sent postage-free by the McIntire organization.[381]

A courageous and forceful leader, Mackay and others named in the Matthews article responded the following October with a "Letter to Presbyterians." It denounced careless and indiscriminate anti-communism. Mackay criticized the tactics of Senator McCarthy, who by allegation and innuendo, was urging that prominent Presbyterian ministers were secretly harboring Communist opinions, and who then had charged that President Eisenhower was sheltering Communists in his administration. He wrote that while U. S. leaders had a responsibility to make the nation as secure as possible, "there is no absolute security in human affairs, nor is security the ultimate human obligation. A still greater obligation . . . is to make sure that what we mean by security, and the methods we employ to achieve it, are in accordance with the will of God." Mackay believed that, "No political order can prevail which deliberately leaves God out of account," and for that reason, he believed that communism would ultimately fail. He said that "Loyalty to great principles of truth and justice has made our nation great; such loyalty alone can keep it great and ensure its destiny."[382]

Mackay's letter was one of the factors that led to the Senate's censure of McCarthy on December 2, 1954, who died a few years later from alcoholism. John C. Stennis, Mississippi's Presbyterian U. S. Senator, served on the select committee that probed charges against McCarthy. Though resolutely anti-communist, Stennis was the first Senate Democrat to call for McCarthy's censure, finding his tactics to be unfair and offensive. The "Red Scare," as it was called, was at that time causing immense anxiety in the public mind, and McCarthy's charges brought the Church into the discussion, and greatly added to the fears of some conservatives in the South as to where union discussions with the U.S.A. Church might lead.[383]

L. Nelson Bell argued that the authors of the Letter to Presbyterians "played into the hands of the communists." He identified Mackay as one of the "many men who had permitted their social passion to lead them into associations, where any attempt to expose communist infiltration would find them in the limelight." Most Presbyterians expressed hearty approval for Mackay and felt that his letter provided a much-needed rebuke to the tactics of McCarthy and his followers.[384]

Many Southerners continued to believe that the civil rights movement was Communist inspired and feared that "outside agitators" were sowing discontent where without them there would be none. Columns in *The Christian Observer*, *Presbyterian Outlook*, and *Southern Presbyterian Journal* discussed the matter fully. The *Journal* branded proposed federal civil rights legislation as "unjust and unconstitutional," "socialistic and communistic," asserting that it would lead to "regimentation and dictatorship," making "continuous inroads upon states' rights."[385]

The governing bodies of the PCUS generally took a different tack. The Assembly's Committee on Christian

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[381] Alexander cited in Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 110.

[382] For text of Mackay's letter, see Maurice W. Armstrong, *et. al*., eds., *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956): 317-20; also James H. Smylie, "Mackay and McCarthyism, 1953-54," *Journal of Church and State* 6 (Autumn 1964): 352-65; Rick Nutt, "For Truth and Liberty: Presbyterians and McCarthyism," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (Spring 2000): 51-66; James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012): 408-12.

[383] Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960).

[384] L. Nelson Bell, "A Strange Pronouncement," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 12 (November 18, 1953): 3-4.

[385] See e.g., J. E. Flow, "Is Segregation UnChristian?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 10 (August 29, 1951): 4-5; J. E. Cousar, "Eye to Eye in Church," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (April 15, 1948): 8-10; Vernon W. Patterson, "Which Road and Whither," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (May 1, 1947): 20-24; L. E. Faulkner, "Reasons the Presbyterian Church (U. S.) Should Withdraw from the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (August 15, 1947): 13-17; *Presbyterian Outlook* 129 (September 1, 1947): 3-4; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Relations asked in 1949 if Presbyterians would allow "secular" forces "to be the chief instruments of justice" in the realm of civil relations? The Synod of North Carolina charged in 1950 that the Church had lagged behind the government as well as the business community in the field of Negro rights. It called on Presbyterians to exert moral leadership. The Assembly declared in 1951 that "We cannot leave this matter to the politicians and the labor unions." As to whether the civil rights movement was Communist inspired, the Assembly believed that racism was a grave threat to American democracy and that extension of civil rights was crucial to the resistance of Communism and a keystone of the nation's strength before a watching world. It resolved that, "What we do about civil rights, or what we decline to do, will influence for years to come the stability and direction of our own and other countries all over the world." At stake were "our domestic peace and unity, our international security, and the strength of our moral leadership as a world power."[386] As Dupont wrote, "Though the notion that Communists drove the quest for Black equality had a decades-old history, the presence, strength, and apparent credibility of this argument increased exponentially in the wake of the High Court's [1954 school desegregation ruling]. Segregationists from every Southern state perpetuated the belief that civil rights initiatives originated in a Communist plot to weaken America." Dupont's research reveals that "Mississippians occupied the vanguard of this effort."[387]

In Mississippi, the Cold War Communist threat caused most white people to draw more closely into their own world-view. As George Lewis observed, "Given that both the Cold War and southern resistance to racial integration began to precipitate concurrently in the late 1940s, it is not surprising that the global concerns of the Cold War made a telling contribution to the atmosphere and context in which massive resistance was played out." Indeed, American concerns about race relations did not arise and could not be addressed in domestic isolation, for white Americans had long feared that communists would infiltrate and exploit the African American population, along with the nation's other racial and ethnic minorities. The Church's reaction to Communism's atheistic platform only heightened such concerns. Scholars have argued that segregationist politicians imported the tactics of Congressional and FBI anti-communist investigations and activities into their states and local populations in an attempt to shore up "southern nationalism." Mississippi U. S. Senator James O. Eastland lost no opportunity of declaring race mixing to be the goal of communist agitators in his state. But as Lewis has observed, "Anticommunism also offered more astute segregationists the opportunity to deflect culpability away from their own actions and instead lay the blame for those disturbances on often ill-defined, 'subversive' outside forces."[388]

Dupont wrote that, "Mississippi's religious red scare tore most malevolently through the denominations already wracked by anticommunism at the national level. Deeply ambivalent about their communions' openness to heresies like the social gospel, economic planning, and racial equality, Methodists and Presbyterians in Mississippi elaborated the notion that only an apostate faith would champion the racial struggle." Conservatives wished to silence the Church as a voice for Black equality. She wrote, "Branding the religious champions of racial equality as Communists—who could not be real Christians—endowed the quest for continued segregation with a greater spiritual urgency and wound the racial hierarchy tightly to conservative religion." The rhetoric of the Cold War threat, and particularly the suspicion that integration activities were prompted by communists also helped align evangelical faith with conservative politics, so that few questioned which gave rise to the other.[389]

A few Mississippi Presbyterians worked for change. Sarah Barry of Benoit (later a PCUS missionary in Korea) wrote her master of religious education thesis at New York's Biblical Seminary on "The Role of the PCUS in a Segregated Society." Dwyn Mecklin Mounger, a Mississippi minister's son, prepared a thesis at Princeton on racial attitudes in the PCUS. Elizabeth Spencer, a daughter of the Carrollton Presbyterian Church and an internationally

[386] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1949): 191-92; Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina (PCUS, 1950): 380-81; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1951): 81; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1949): 178.

[387] Dupont, "Mississippi's Religious Red Scare," 16-17.

[388] George Lewis, "White South, Red Nation: Massive Resistance and the Cold War," in Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 117, 128; see also Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare;* George Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

[389] Dupont, "Mississippi's Religious Red Scare," 4, 20, 23.

acclaimed author, spoke against the segregationist policies of church leaders in Mississippi. Her novel, *The Voice at the Back Door* (1956), written in Italy, explored race relations in her home state.[390] Meanwhile, across Mississippi, billboards sprang up purporting to show the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. attending a "Communist Training School" at Monteagle, Tennessee. Other billboards shouted against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, urging, "Impeach Earl Warren."

Elizabeth Spencer, a daughter of the Carrollton Presbyterian Church and graduate of Belhaven College, was an honored author and writer of short stories. Her novel *The Voice at the Back Door* (1956) was one of the first by a southern author to challenge the region's racial practices. In her memoir, *Landscapes of the Heart*, Spencer recalled the religious life of Carrollton in the 1920s and '30s.

Mississippi Presbyterians and Church Segregation

Segregationist laws enacted after adoption of the 1890 Mississippi constitution disenfranchised Black voters. After the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision, separate schools and coaches on railroad trains became the norm. Though a few freed slaves continued to worship in the white-controlled churches, few if any, new African American members were attracted to these congregations. Over time, most white Mississippi Presbyterians came to accept these arrangements, including churches that worshiped along segregated racial lines as the norm. They assumed that such matters were represented social practicalities and, if pressed, believed that they were in accordance with divine directive. The fact that Black and white had once worshiped together was largely forgotten. Indeed, as Dupont has observed, "These Mississippians generally regarded as patently absurd the notion that God frowned on their racial arrangement; the sudden appearance of segregation in some syllabus of sins jolted their sensibilities." White Presbyterian pulpits in Mississippi were generally silent about the inequities of segregation and Black suffering and by their emphasis on the non-political mission of personal evangelism. During the 1940s and '50s, as criticism of segregation rose among American church leaders, many Southern Presbyterians, as well as white members of other Southern churches, began to feel singled out for criticism, even persecuted for their beliefs. In their world, "racial integration represented a heinous moral evil—and they fought it as if against the devil himself." Conservatives reacted by constant criticism against PCUS leadership over a host of issues—implying that the denomination was plagued by a drift away from its allegiance to biblical authority as in former

[390] Sarah Barry, "The Role of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in a Segregated Society" (unpublished M.R.E. thesis, Biblical Seminary, New York City, 1955); Hodding Carter Jr., "Racial Crisis in the Deep South," *Saturday Evening Post* 228 (December 17, 1955): 75; Campbell, *Providence*, 3-16; James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 222-24; Elizabeth Spencer, *Landscapes of the Heart: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1998).

days.[391] Ironically, the "liberal" critics cited segregation and other racial animus as evidence of drift from biblical authority by its conservative defenders—a drift that the conservatives could not recognize or admit.

Born in efforts to defend a Christian's right to own slaves, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States (after 1865, the PCUS)[392] had in some cases continued to justify the actions of their slave-holding ancestors, the right of secession, states' rights, and among Baptists and Presbyterians, the greater doctrinal orthodoxy of the post-Civil War Southern denominations over against their counterparts above the Mason-Dixon line. Other churches such as the Cumberland Presbyterians and Episcopalians had avoided statements concerning slavery or secession during the war, and after Lee's surrender quickly re-established old ties. Dupont wrote that, "After the war, these bodies [the Southern Methodists, Baptists, and the PCUS] helped celebrate the 'Lost Cause' as a civic and nationalistic faith rooted in the vaunted memory of the vanquished and vanished Confederacy. The South's major white religious traditions continued to foster [their] strong sense of distinctiveness well into the 20th century, even as other forces strengthened Southerners' national bonds. Southern Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians remained regionally separate bodies that regarded themselves as the custodians of true Christianity."[393]

Some Southern Protestants worked to organize churches allied with their denominations outside the South. Southern Baptists in particular evangelized beyond the borders of Dixie. After the Civil War, the PCUS received sympathetic congregations, presbyteries, and synods in the Border States of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Texas. This reflected the fact that the U.S.A. Assembly's wartime deliverances in support of the federal government and demanding that Presbyterians in Confederate territory do the same, had indeed gone too far. In the intervening years, a belief grew that the U.S.A. Church (and other denominations outside the South) had corrupted strict orthodoxy. Charges were regularly made that these bodies were guilty of forsaking high views of biblical inspiration, weakening the Church's overseas missionary endeavor (and among Presbyterians, compromising core Calvinistic beliefs). Instead, it was claimed that these Northern bodies—principally those allied with the Federal Council of Churches—were striving to improve human conditions in the present world while neglecting to present the claims of the gospel to lost sinners.

Further complexities entered the period: among them questions of race relations. If after the Civil War there was pressure to maintain Southern religious isolation, pressure for change rose after another great war—World War II—which was fought, in part, to end the racist atrocities of the Nazi Reich. As Dupont wrote, "America's racial tensions rose to acute levels as its vast war machinery dismantled and military personnel flocked home. Affronted by the great irony that their own racially troubled nation had dispatched them abroad in a war against racial hatred, Black Americans achieved important gains during the war. . . . Though the denominations maintained segregated norms, religious progressives in their midst heard and contributed to the country's most frank discussions about race. From seminaries and denominational offices, in women's groups, among missionaries on foreign fields, and in the Black membership, this cadre pointedly condemned American racial practices."[394]

Even before the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation, decision, conservative anxieties were heightened by escalating controversies over race and challenges to the prevailing system of segregation that characterized all areas of Southern society, including church life. Although a few Blacks had continued as late as World War I to worship in the churches of their former masters, the vast majority of Mississippi Blacks had long before withdrawn from white-dominated congregations, creating the situation to which the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. referred in his book, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (1958), as

[391] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 2-4.

[392] James H. Smylie, "Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS)," *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989): 1325-26; Louis B. Weeks, Presbyterian Church in the United States," Daniel G. Reid, *et. al*., eds., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, Ill. Inter-Varsity Press, 1990): 931; Walter L. Lingle, *Presbyterians: Their History and Beliefs* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1957): 87-109.

[393] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 41.

[394] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 41.

"11:00 o'clock, Sunday, America's most segregated hour."[395] (He repeated the charge during a sermon delivered in the National Cathedral, March 31, 1968.)

Change was slow, and it was in the Church, for some, that a sort of line was drawn against change. *The Presbyterian Outlook* warned that "secular, non-Protestant" agencies were taking the lead in eradicating segregation," and predicted that unless Christians rallied to support the civil rights movement, the Church would become "the last stronghold of segregation."[396] In 1953, *The Outlook* predicted that local congregations would be tempted to turn themselves into havens for those opposing desegregation. "Such capitulation to the evil forces of the world could be the price of death to a church. No longer could Christianity, "afford to be on the wrong side of a moral force, as it was in some areas when it defended slavery." It stated that if the Supreme Court indeed decided against separate schools based on race, then the Church would stand condemned if it failed to practice the Gospel of Christ as the wider society was being called to do.[397]

In the late 1940s, more liberal Presbyterians began to see segregation as an evil that should be opposed. For example, the Synod of Alabama declared that "The Negro of the South is thrown into a galling dilemma. We encourage him to be clean but rent him houses with no bath facilities; to be healthy in moldy shacks on unpaved streets, in bottom lands; to dress properly on a pauper's income . . . to vote when registrars ask impossible questions; to love his country which shows little affection for him." "Love for the Negro," the synod concluded, "if devoid of justice, is sentimentality. Genuine love cannot by-pass justice in its show of affection." Still, it was not until 1953 and 1954 that the PCUS Assembly declared that segregation was itself unchristian.[398] Some viewed these developments as sinister.

Although the number of Black Presbyterians in the South was small and declining, the inclusion of African Americans in meetings of church governing bodies and services of worship implied to old-order Presbyterians a bestowal of social equality that opened the way to familiar associations that might ultimately include courtship and marriage. Many sought to perpetuate segregated congregations, presbyteries, and synods, but some Mississippi Presbyterians, Black and white, desired change. This was true even in Mississippi, where Presbyterianism was as socially conservative as in any corner of the Church. Among the first to act were the elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford, who, with the support of their progressive-minded pastor, the Rev. John K. Johnson, resolved on June 21, 1954, that any African American wishing to attend services would be seated, consistent with the action of the General Assembly. Johnson's leadership, along with that of several key elders, set a course for the Oxford Church that would establish for it a key place in the state's progressive religious circles for decades to come. So far as is known, it was the first PCUS church in the state to adopt such a policy.[399]

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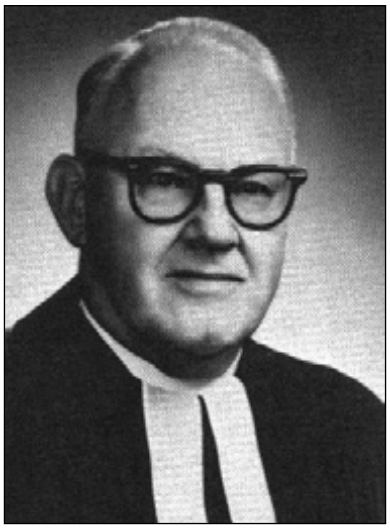
[395] Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958): 202.

[396] *Presbyterian Outlook* 84 (November 10, 1952): 4.

[397] *Presbyterian Outlook* 85 (October 12, 1953): 8; 85 (November 30, 1953): 3; 85 (December 7, 1953): 6-7.

[398] Minutes of the Synod of Alabama (PCUS, 1950): 38; see Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 58.

[399] Willie Morris, a Mississippian and a perceptive critic of Southern manners and morals, wrote in 1981: "The churches will be the last institutions to integrate, of course." *Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home* (Oxford: Yoknapatawpha Press, 1981): 33; cf. Edwin Harrel Jr., *White Sects and Black Men in the Recent South* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971).



—photo from Idlewild Presbyterian, Memphis.

During the pastorate of the Rev. John K. Johnson in 1954, the session of the First Church of Oxford adopted a non-discriminatory policy, opening the church's doors to African American worshipers. So far as is known, it was the first PCUS congregation in the state to take such action.—p. 410.

In 1964, PCUS membership in Mississippi reached its numerical high point. Thereafter, Presbyterians, increasingly divided with arguments about race, the nature of biblical inspiration and authority, church union, ordination of women, and policies concerning church property, saw their membership begin to decline. Skies were darkening on the Presbyterian horizon. PCUS opponents of integration and ecclesiastical union mentioned schism more often. A Yazoo City writer warned the pro-integration *Presbyterian Outlook*: "Keep on . . . until you drive all the Southern Presbyterian Churches out of the General Assembly, then you and the NAACP can be happy." Others spoke in different tones. The Rev. Warner L. Hall, a native of Covington, Tennessee, and former pastor at Leland (then pastor of Charlotte, North Carolina's Covenant Presbyterian Church—called by *The Charlotte Observer*, "the conscience of Charlotte" for his progressive racial stance), wrote that "throughout the South there is the uneasy feeling that our way of living is under the judgment of God."

He said:

> The South has been contemptuously referred to as the 'Bible Belt.' Whether it be a stigma or an honor, it is true that the area regards the Bible with a respect likely unmatched elsewhere in the nation. For many decades, ministers in their sermons and teachers in Sunday-school classes have been trying to lay the message of the Christian gospel alongside our racial practices. Added to this has been the personal study of the Bible and a consequent searching of the heart by an unnumbered but very considerable host. They know and accept the Pauline dictum that 'in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free' (Galatians 3:28). To this they are prepared to add, intellectually at least, "neither white nor Negro."[400]

Though most whites and African Americans in Mississippi were professing Christians, they shared little in other respects. Between 1950 and 1960, some 200,000 Black persons had left the state. Few African Americans owned land, and the sharecropping system impoverished most who worked in agriculture. Beginning in the 1940s, agricultural workers were increasingly displaced by machines that plowed fields and harvested cotton. The mechanical cotton pickers were said to duplicate the work of 40 humans. This situation was particularly true in the

[400] Warner L. Hall, "Race Relations and the American Church: The Mind of the White South," *Religion in Life* 26 (1957): 36-67; see James H. Smylie, "The Bible, Race, and the Changing South," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 59 (Summer 1981): 197-217.

Mississippi Delta. The Percy Plantation near Leland, a tract of 5,000 acres, had at its peak some 400 sharecropping families, but by the late 1950s, most of the larger Delta cotton plantations used the machines. A decade later, most of these were fully mechanized from planting to harvest, leaving many Black workers unemployed and facing even more desperate conditions than before.[401]

The Rev. Richard T. Harbison, a son of Greenville's First Presbyterian Church, asserted that though there was a perception that many in the Mississippi Delta partook of "the good life," not all Deltans found "the good life" to be their way of life. The large African American population of the Delta, more than half of which was Black, lived in poverty. Harbison said that it was "self-evident that the Delta's 'way of life' was made possible by the exploitation of the large number of blacks." He believed the exploitation was systematic and pervasive. Harbison illustrated the system with an example from his own growing-up years in Greenville:

> I have a vivid memory of my father's coming home in the evening at the time that cotton picking was about to begin, sitting in his chair, hitting his fist on its arm and saying: 'They've done it again! They've done it again!' 'They' were the planters, most of whom were his close, life-long friends, who gathered at the courthouse every fall to agree on a wage per pound to pay the cotton pickers. 'They've done it again!' he would say, 'And they know it's wrong. It's too low.'

Harbison added that, "I'm sure my father's outraged sense of justice was not without its own self-interest. As a wholesale groceryman who sold mainly to the country stores and small groceries in the towns, he depended not only on a good crop, as did everyone else in the Delta, but on the black population's benefiting from that crop. But it was the unfairness and unreasonableness of the collusion that angered him. Immobilized and powerless, the black population, with few exceptions, sank deeper and deeper into poverty."[402]

As younger Blacks moved North, they left a Black population disproportionately comprised of the very young and the very old. In some Delta counties, 65% of the population depended upon government assistance as a primary source of income. Meanwhile, a minority of wealthy whites dominated the economy. In Bolivar County, 5% of farms included more than half of the land under cultivation. In 1960, the median number of school years completed was 10 for whites and 4.9 for Blacks. No Black high school in the Delta had received accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. In 1960, Sunflower County had 11,818 housing units, of which 6,214 lacked flush toilets, 7,265 had no bathtub, and 4,593 had no piped water. In the same year, only 5.2% of Mississippi's eligible Black population had registered to vote. In 1950, Black rights activist Wilson Ashford became one of Oktibbeha County's first African American voter registrants since the turn of the century. The numbers by county were shocking: In 1961, only 612 of 20,600 eligible Blacks in Bolivar County were registered; only 472 of 16,933 were registered in Leflore; two Blacks only were registered in Humphreys; and none in Issaquena. The World Council of Churches compared conditions in the Mississippi Delta to those in developing countries. Never before had the WCC been asked to give assistance in the United States. Many of the state's white Christians, instead of being moved to compassion, reacted defensively, blaming the poor for their condition and refusing to admit that they profited from the situation. "There is certainly good reason to suspect that the relative intensity of Mississippi's racial turmoil may help to explain why employment grew by only 5% statewide in the 1960s in comparison to roughly 25% in both Georgia and North Carolina."[403]

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[401] Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1984): 185-86.

[402] Richard T. Harbison, "Why So Fertile a Land: Cotton, Catfish, Casinos, and the Contemplative Conscience (unpublished paper presented to the SPHEX Club, Lynchburg, Va., January 5, 1995): 9-10. Used with permission.

[403] See Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, viii, 3-5, 82, 98-124, 184-205, 254, 262-67.

African American Presbyterians in PCUS Worshiped Separately

Though Presbyterians aligned with the PCUS had placed most of their African American congregations in separate presbyteries and synods, these persons were still part of the General Assembly, albeit treated there in condescending and demeaning ways. While only a fraction of PCUS membership was African American—about 2,500 of 554,000 communicants in 1943—these Black members tended to come from the African American community's small but respected middle class. Many were teachers. Almost all aimed to send their children to college.[404]

After the Civil War, white-controlled churches had become agents of segregation in a way they had not previously been. While African Americans had previously been confined to galleries or rear pews, white and Black could hear the same sermon and receive the Holy Communion together. Now, the churches became an example of segregated existence, and most forgot that Black persons had once worshiped with whites. As old churches were replaced, few of the old slave galleries remained to remind Mississippi Presbyterians of this fact. When the old galleries were pointed out, it was to remind visitors that whites had once owned slaves, not that African Americans and whites had worshiped together. As Charles Reagan Wilson, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, noted, "A racial color line was now established in religion, a precursor to the political and legal color line achieved in the 1890s through Jim Crow laws and disenfranchisement."[405]

Another stark fact remained. Though many African Americans had left the white-controlled congregations by choice, the churches—Black and white—had led the way in the segregation of the races. This situation had only hardened in the 20th century. Many Mississippian Presbyterians were appalled by the actions of their 1954 Assembly regarding union with the U.S.A. Church and school desegregation. They had been informed through publications such as *The Presbyterian Journal* that as early as 1946, the U.S.A. Church had adopted the concept of a "non-segregated church in a non-segregated society."

Many saw wider implications in the high court's decree. Former governor Hugh L. White vowed that, "If the Supreme Court's [*Brown v. Board of Education*] decision is observed in my church, I will be forced to find some other place to worship." Governor White and Chalmers Alexander, a prominent Jackson attorney, city commissioner, and elder in the First Presbyterian Church, had represented their presbyteries at the General Assembly, where had they opposed its actions in favor of racial inclusion and Presbyterian union. As Sean Michael Lucas remarked, This need to react led PCUS conservatives "to link racial traditionalism, anticommunism, and libertarianism into a powerful argument for conservative dissent, stressing what was wrong with their church and their country," so that "Suddenly, the controversy over reunion became more than a fight to preserve a southern church; it became a battle to preserve the southern way of life."[406]

Dupont wrote that, "Once the denominations declared support for *Brown*, national religious institutions appeared as menacing to the southern way of life as the Supreme Court, and the [Mississippi] churches thus quickly joined the opposition to integration. Though strongly tied to their national institutions, Mississippi's Christian citizens functioned as valuable lieutenants in the state's program of massive resistance. Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians stymied integrationist arguments of religious origins by stifling, drowning out, or contravening both the national church and their local coreligionists of more moderate inclinations. They began by vigorously denouncing the denominational endorsements of segregation."[407] Bruce Hilton, a historian of the National Council of Churches' Delta Ministry observed that the churches of Mississippi exercised an immense influence among their

[404] See Gordon W. Blackwell, Lee M. Brooks, and S. H. Hobbs Jr., *Church and Community in the South* (Richmond: John Knox, 1949).

[405] Charles Reagan Wilson, *Judgment and Grace in Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995): 6.

[406] Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 132, 137; "Say State Presbyterians Would Secede If Proposed Union Goes Into Effect," *Jackson Daily News* (June 1, 1954): 1; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 228; James C. Cobb, *The Brown Decision, Jim Crow, and Southern Identity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

[407] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 66-67.

people and beyond. "The minister, while he has more prestige than power in a community, is part of every public function, pronouncing invocations and benedictions and lending the required air of piety. The power structure knows, too that the minister, as a person who interprets 'the Word,' is a man they can use to settle an idea to the people." Hilton said in 1969 that, "Little of this prestige is exerted, so far, on the side of social justice."[408] Many ministers instead used their pulpits to underscore the status quo, following South Carolina's James Henley Thornwell who, as the pressures of abolitionism increased and Civil War approached, had outlined the South's doctrine of the Church's "Spirituality."

Such teachings were reaffirmed by the respected Professor William Childs Robinson, an articulate, strongly conservative, Harvard-educated member of the Columbia Seminary faculty and defender of segregation, who often spoke to Presbyterian gatherings in Mississippi, as in 1941 when the Rev. W. H. McIntosh of Hattiesburg invited him to address the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church, as well as the student body of Mississippi Southern College.[409] An opponent of union with the U.S.A. Church, Robinson had written in 1940 concerning [the] differences between the two churches: "We remind you of our situation in the South in regard to the race question. . . ." He said, that "Paul preached to slaves to be content with their lot and to look to Christ for a blessed hereafter," and that Paul did not condemn human bondage as a social evil but concentrated upon the personal salvation of master and servant alike.

As a believer in the doctrine of the Church's spirituality, Robinson condemned efforts for desegregation in the name of the Church and did not believe that "racial amalgamation" or "the abolition of all social segregation" would lead to justice for African Americans. Better relations would come by God's action, not man's." Robinson wrote in *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* on August 15, 1946, that "God's hand will be laid upon His people of the white and negro [*sic*] races as they labor together in Christ, that God's blessing will be upon souls and upon bodies, upon individuals and upon society . . . that our two races will be helped to walk together in peace and contentment." Robinson's biographer, who called him the virtual father of the movement to form a continuing Presbyterian Church, saying that "without whom it would never have been formed," later wished that Robinson had "taken a more courageous and more biblical stance in promoting racial integration, as did his [Robinson's] beloved professor at Princeton Seminary, B. B. Warfield."[410]

Similarly, the elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, objecting to actions of the Ninety-seventh PCUS Assembly, as cited in *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* (June 19, 1957), quoted the *Westminster Confession's* strictures against involvement of synods and councils in "civil affairs," stating that "the very Son of God did not during his earthly ministry . . . attempt . . . to abolish the social customs and patterns of the day . . . though the Pharisees tempted him . . . to do so." Such citations of the *Confession* usually omitted the latter part of the paragraph which outlined exceptions to the rule, namely, that: "unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice or satisfaction of conscience, if they are thereto requested by civil magistrates" (Chapter XXXII, section iv).[411]

Many who embraced the civil rights cause were children of the Church. Most of the Black leaders were

[408] Bruce Hilton, *The Delta Ministry* (New York: Macmillan, 1969): 173; James F. Findlay Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[409] Sean Michael Lucas, *Grace Transforms: A History of the First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi* (Hattiesburg: Tishomingo Tree Press, 2013): 23.
[410] "James Henley Thornwell," in John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau, eds., *Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1873): 4:382-83; William Childs Robinson, "Reunion of the Presbyterian Churches U.S.A. and U. S.," *Christian Observer* (June 24, 1940); *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (December 1, 1947); see also, William Childs Robinson, "Christ our Peace in Race Relations," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 4 (July 1945): 8; David B. Calhoun, *"Pleading for a Reformation Vision:" The Life and Selected Writings of William Childs Robinson, 1897-1982* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 2013): 110; see Bradley J. Gundlach, "'Wicked Caste:' B. B. Warfield, Biblical Authority, and Jim Crow," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 85 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 28-47.
[411] "Statement Adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 19, 1957): 8.

ministers, so that as Charles Reagan Wilson has remarked, "When the civil rights movement challenged the racially segregated aspects of that culture, it naturally spoke in religious language understood by the region's Blacks and whites." Whether this language inspired approval or resistance, it was clearly religious language to the Church people who heard it.[412]

Mississippi-born Presbyterian minister Dwyn Mecklin Mounger asserted in a Princeton thesis in 1965:

> Adherents of the conservative viewpoint taught that the New Testament word *gospel* 'denoted, simply, the preaching of individual salvation to men,' or as L. Nelson Bell wrote, 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not Christian ethics. It is not morality. It is not social righteousness. These and many other things are the fruits of the Gospel.' As writer after writer emphasized in the pages of *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, action on issues such as race relations was reserved for individuals as 'Christian citizens,' who had responsibility 'as citizens of society' to reform these evils. But the Church as an entity should never consider or offer an opinion on such matters, for 'she is not an expert in these fields of life,' and 'It will turn her from the great task of preaching the Gospel.'[413]

Viewing the Church as a purely spiritual body, unconcerned with the structures of society and focused solely with the salvation of souls, Thornwell and his successors believed that society was changed by the conversion of individual sinners, who might then address its corporate ills. Some believed that this was a new idea, a teaching at variance with the historic Reformed position. Princeton's Charles Hodge had been amazed at what he called Thornwell's "new and startling doctrine of the church." It is true, he said, "that the church is not of this world." But, he continued, "It is her prerogative and duty to testify for the truth and law of God, wherever she can make her voice heard." Hodge exclaimed that if Thornwell was correct, it meant "that Presbyterians neither in this country nor in Europe, have ever understood their own system."

Hodge and other critics noted wryly that Thornwell's doctrine came at such a time as to excuse the Church from addressing moral issues arising from the practice of slavery. In a later generation, the influential analyst of American racial practices, the Swedish Nobel laureate Gunnar Myrdal, who believed that whites oppressed African Americans and then cited Blacks' poor performance as justification for discrimination, asserted that the discriminatory practices of many Americans were bolstered with strong religious sanction. Myrdal believed that Southern whites based the caste system of their region on the "defense ideology of slavery"—an ideology that was explicated principally by Southern Presbyterian theologians such as Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer. His assertion was given credence by the fact that 20th century Presbyterian defenders of segregation such as Bell and G. T. Gillespie did, in fact, declare that Southern slaveholding had been legitimate, at least on biblical grounds. As Bell wrote in 1944, "Why God saw fit to make some men white and some Black may go back to Genesis 9."[414]

There was a difference among Southerners as to whether segregation should be upheld on a voluntary or customary basis or whether it needed the power of law. Two years after the Assembly had supported the Supreme Court's decision, supporters of *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* issued a statement saying that, "Voluntary segregation in churches, schools and other social relations is for the highest interest of the races and is not un-Christian." While *The Journal*'s statement emphasized the voluntary character of the segregation it advocated,

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412 Wilson*, Judgment and Grace in Dixie*, 12.

413 Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 48; L. Nelson Bell, "What is the Gospel?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 5 (August 1, 1946): 3; See D. S. Gage, "Characteristics of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (March 1, 1948): 11; Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); John Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1994).

414 Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 31 (1859): 617-18; Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*: 1:584; Morton H. Smith, *"How Is the Gold Become Dim?" The Decline of the Presbyterian Church, U. S.* (Published by the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church, 1973): 153.

some (primarily persons outside the churches) held that the maintenance of segregation by law was essential to the good order of society. A few argued this on biblical grounds.[415]

James McBride Dabbs, a South Carolina Presbyterian writer, believed that the reactions and emotions prompted by the challenges to segregation were akin to those held by post-Civil War devotees of the Lost Cause. He noted, moreover, that many ministers of that past era had allowed themselves to be turned virtually into priests of that lonely enterprise. Dabbs said that for many white Southerners, segregation was "the only thing we have left, the last beleaguered fortress of the Lost Cause." If that were given up, "Who will remember what the Old South was?" He saw that people turned to their ministers as priests for the threatened ideology. Some seemed to have substituted the Church for the Confederacy as the last sacred icon of the Lost Cause.[416]

Though many warned that ecclesiastical statements on behalf of better race relations signaled the abandonment of the doctrine of the Church's spirituality and posed a distraction from the preaching of the gospel, many Southern Presbyterians had felt constrained by the gospel to speak forcefully with regard to social issues such as the prohibition of liquor, gambling, mob violence, child labor, and the like. Dealing with racial problems, however, seemed somehow different, more complicated, so that a greater acquiescence to the idea of the Church's spirituality prevailed, resulting in a general silence upon the subject among Mississippi Presbyterians. Silence was urged to keep the peace: in the General Assembly, in presbyteries, and in local congregations. As Jason Sokol, a historian of the civil rights movement, explained, "Most white southerners identified neither with the civil rights movement nor with its violent resisters. They were fearful, silent, and often inert."[417]

Still, not all Southerners and not all Southern Presbyterians were silent, nor did they advocate inaction. The PCUS Permanent Committee on Social and Moral Welfare, established in 1943, as well as individual pastors and lay writers, did bring the matter to the Church's attention, causing intense discomfort in some circles. The committee predicted that economic problems and racial tension would increase following the Second World War. It reminded white Southerners that thousands of Negroes in the armed services were "enjoying privileges that were not theirs in civil life," and that upon their return, they would demand "equal rights with white people under the law." The committee stated that in the South, "we have been unjust to the Negro."[418]

PCUS newspapers weighed liberal and conservative views on racial integration. *The Presbyterian Outlook* carried articles urging an end to segregation; but *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* carried many articles, including several by former Belhaven president William H. Frazer, urging that the segregated societal and religious structures be maintained, and throughout Southern Presbyterianism, opposition to union with the U.S.A. Church became bound up with the belief that the "Northern Church" was committed to social change in general and racial integration in particular. Frazer urged that a key reason for preserving the PCUS was "its sensible attitude toward race relations," which he defined as "demonstrating respect and Christian love," while avoiding "social intermingling of the races."[419]

Before 1953, conservative publications such as *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* represented union with the Northern Church as a direct challenge to the prevailing racial order, so that in 1940, the Rev. W. A. Gamble, pastor at Raymond and Brandon, writing in *The Mississippi Visitor*, listed among the reasons for opposing union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.: the Northern Church's "granting of social courtesies to Negroes" at Northern Church meetings, the observance of Lincoln's birthday, and the U.S.A. Church's support for a proposed federal anti-lynch law. Some Mississippians had already become concerned about the teaching in their seminaries when Columbia Seminary professor J. McDowell Richards has spoken out in the spring of 1947 in an article titled,

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415 Ernest Trice Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem," 17; Kenneth K. Bailey, *Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964): 145-46.

416 James McBride Dabbs, *Haunted by God* (Richmond: John Knox, 1972): 128-29; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:540.

417 R. D. Bedinger, "Some Observations," *Presbyterian of the South* 68 (February 2, 1944): 9; Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 4.

418 Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1944): 147-51.

419 William H. Frazer, "Why I Favor Preserving the Southern Church," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 11 (July 23, 1952): 7-8.

"The Golden Rule and Racial Relationships," published in *The Presbyterian Outlook*. The Rev. J. David Simpson of Newton perhaps expressed the deepest conservative fear, that of racial intermarriage, writing in 1948, that, "The Mulatto strain brings stultification of progress, the gradual fading of the genius strain, the slow deterioration and moral degeneracy of the social order." As Presbyterian historian Erskine Clarke remarked, "The bitterness that had once been aimed at Yankees now turned inward on the Southern Church itself."[420]

Many believed that union with the U.S.A. Church was inevitable, and to prepare for that eventuality, on August 20, 1952, the Continuing Church Committee formed an Association for the Preservation and Continuation of the Southern Presbyterian Church. It dedicated itself to purity of doctrine, local ownership of church property, the spiritual mission of the church, and "the matter of 'race relations' that divides the two branches," charging that the U.S.A. Church "demands the abrogation of segregation, and the allowing of races to intermingle without any adherence to racial lines," whereas the Southern Church believed that "Christian love could exist between the races only with the preservation of 'racial integrity.'"[421]

PCUS Membership and the Federal Council of Churches

PCUS membership in the Federal, and after 1950, its successor, the National Council of Churches, was a flashpoint for Mississippi segregationists, as well as those who feared the loss of their distinctive Southern Presbyterian identity through unions promoted by the ecumenical movement. Some of the FCC/NCC inter-church activities, such as denominational participation in the American Bible Society, Church World Service, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lord's Day Alliance, Religion in American Life, the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Missionary Personnel, occasioned no objection. The enthusiastic participation of several nationally-respected Presbyterians, such as John Foster Dulles, a member of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City and secretary of state in the Eisenhower administration, strengthened the organization's respectability. But the National Council came in for particular criticism by religious conservatives when it addressed social issues and, in particular, race relations. Critics such as the separatist Presbyterian evangelist, editor, and radio broadcaster Carl McIntire, as well as many in the PCUS, devoted much energy to identifying trends in the NCC that opposed American democracy, capitalism, and "the Southern way of life." Some charged that it had been infiltrated by communists. A best-selling critique of liberal religious activities published in 1964 by John Stormer, an author associated with McIntire's *Christian Beacon*, was entitled, *None Dare Call It Treason*. It included a chapter on the NCC, "Subverting our Religious Heritage." The booklet, as well as several widely cited articles in *The Readers' Digest*, summed the feelings of many conservative Mississippi Presbyterians over a span of decades.[422]

For example, after the PCUS rejoined the Federal Council in 1941, Meridian Presbytery immediately asked the Assembly to reconsider. In a series of overtures brought up again and again through the years, the presbytery cited the council for deliverances "in regard to social, economic and political matters which, according to the plain teaching of the Bible, as interpreted in the *Confession of Faith*, are not proper matters for church action." The presbytery also cited "the undemocratic ways and means the leaders are propagating," as well as "recommending

[420] William H. Frazier, "The Social Separation of the Races," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 9 (July 15, 1950): 6-7; "Some Questions About Segregation," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 10 (November 7, 1951); W. A. Gamble, "Union with the Northern Presbyterian Church Would Spell Doom for Our Church and Its Ideals," 1, 11; J. McDowell Richards, "The Golden Rule and Racial Relationships," *Presbyterian Outlook* 128 (April 21, 1947): 6; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:564; J. David Simpson, "Non-Segregation Means Eventual Intermarriage," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (March 15, 1948): 6-7; T. Erskine Clarke, "The History of Ecumenical Relations in the Southern Presbyterian Church," Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1976): 473.

[421] "Meeting of the Association for the Preservation and Continuation of the Southern Presbyterian Church," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 11 (September 3, 1952): 16.

[422] T. Erskine Clarke, "Presbyterian Ecumenical Activity in the U. S.," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, *The Diversity of Discipleship: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox): 155-57.

social and economic relations and conditions to our government officials, which are contrary to the Southern Presbyterian Church." Failing in the effort to have the PCUS withdraw, it petitioned that the Assembly request the National Council to require all its officials "to subscribe to a belief in the full inspiration and truthfulness of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the elements of faith mentioned in the Apostles Creed, and that if such requirement be not met, that the Church withdraw from the council. This belied a growing conviction among Mississippi Presbyterians that if one espoused a high view of scriptural authority and teaching, one would not advocate what were seen as liberal and unbiblical social policies, such as racial integration or offer any critique of free market capitalism. The Presbyteries of East and Central Mississippi also overtured the Assembly to withdraw from the Federal and later the National Council." Leonard E. Faulkner, an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Hattiesburg and a vociferous critic of the Federal Council, penned articles for *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* in 1948 and 1950 that asserted that the council represented "one of the most effective promoters of planned and managed economy which includes . . . regimentation, collectivism, and different forms of national socialism." Faulkner also cited the Council for its support of President Truman's "mis-named Civil Rights program." Faulkner believed that a comparison of the Communist Party platform and the Federal Council's positions would reveal "a striking commonality in goals and methods."[423]

At a meeting of the North Mississippi Presbytery, April 8, 1947, near the end of the meeting, an overture to the General Assembly was submitted as new business by elder B. A. Bogy, of Rosedale, seeking withdrawal of the PCUS from the Federal Council of Churches. The overture was adopted with considerable margin; however, realizing that the action had been taken hurriedly in the closing moments of the session, late in the day, and when several members had already gone, and not having been apprised that such an overture was to be brought forward, one of the proponents of the action moved for reconsideration, which carried. After discussion, another vote was taken, and the overture was defeated by a small margin.

A similar overture from the session of the Cleveland Church on April 11, 1950, was also answered in the negative. Such actions revealed that the Mississippi presbyteries were not monolithic in their actions. Both the Presbytery of Mississippi and the North Mississippi and East Mississippi presbyteries were regarded as somewhat more moderate than the Central and Meridian presbyteries. Still, the matter lived on. On March 26, 1959, the Rev. Horace Villee, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, wrote to the Rev. Malcolm P. Calhoun, of the PCUS Division of Christian Relations that, "Those who are committed to a program of racial integration are . . . promoting the very thing they sometimes deny: communism." Villee said, "It has been common knowledge for a long time . . . that some of the 'big mouth' church leaders of the East during the past several decades are fellow-travelers with the communists."[424]

Leonard E. Faulkner also labored to preserve understandings of Presbyterian belief and practice he regarded as threatened by theological liberalism, political and social activism, and doctrines of racial equality. In 1951, Faulkner published a pamphlet entitled "Reasons Why the Presbyterian Church in the United States Should Withdraw from the National Council of Churches." He believed the NCC to be spiritually apostate and urged that its "acts, objectives, and policies" were contrary to the constitution of the PCUS. The burden of the pamphlet focused on the NCC's commitment to racial equality, arguing that this was harmful "to both races." Faulkner wrote a series of articles for *The Hattiesburg American*, charging that some leaders of the NCC "are not believers in supernatural religion—the Christian religion." He had been disturbed by a 1942 publication in which the council advocated "application of the Christian principle of social well-being to the acquisition and use of wealth, subordination of speculation and the profit motive to the creative and cooperative spirit . . . a wider and fairer distribution of wealth; a living wage, as a minimum and above this a just share for the worker in the product of industry and agriculture." Faulkner felt that implementation of such an agenda would make the "free enterprise system a thing of the past."[425]

[423] L. E. Faulkner, "The Federal Council of Churches Encourages Regimentation," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 7 (November 15, 1948): 14; and "The Case against the Federal Council of Churches," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 9 (June 1, 1950): 14-17.

[424] Cited in Dupont, "Mississippi's Religious Red Scare," 26.

[425] *Hattiesburg American* (February 17, 1951). Other installments were published on February 10 and 24 and March 3 and 10.

Gradual Change in Presbyterian Racial Policies Takes Place

Pressure for racial change had been mounting in some quarters of the PCUS. In 1949, segregation rules at Montreat were relaxed somewhat for persons attending adult conferences, and in 1950, African American commissioners to the General Assembly at the Synod of Virginia's conference center at Massanetta Springs were allowed to enter the dining room by the same door as whites. The Montreat board also adopted a policy that residence halls and the dining room be opened to Negroes who attended church conferences. The idea of allowing mixed-race groups at youth meetings was more problematic but was addressed several years later.

Many Presbyterians on both sides of such issues advocated a gradualist approach to changes in race relations, particularly as it concerned the integration of public facilities. Progressive white Presbyterians advocated patience, compromise, and stood for obedience to the law, even if they disagreed with integration. The Rev. R. D. Bedinger, a former white missionary to the Belgian Congo, who headed the Assembly's Department of Negro Work in the 1940s before coming to Central Mississippi Presbytery to undertake similar duties, urged that, "Conventions and customs of several generations cannot be broken down in a day, or in a year, or in many years. The patterns of our society will not be altered overnight." Such views were considered realistic by most and were seen as sufficiently progressive for the time.

Conservatives admitted that African Americans had been mistreated. L. Nelson Bell wrote in *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, that "We have sinned against the Negro by humiliating him and by discriminating against him in a hundred ways." He suggested that race relations could be improved by bestowing "the common courtesies of life," such as addressing Negroes with the titles, "Mister, Mrs. and Miss." Bell ventured that Blacks had been discriminated against in such areas of life as politics, economics, and law. Moderate conservative leaders called for African Americans to be treated "equally under the law," condemning lynching (but resisting the imposition of a federal law as a violation of states' rights). They spoke for betterment of their conditions, but in the context of segregated communities. Dwyn Mecklin Mounger explained the matter in this way. Those who sought to preserve the status quo "always made a clear distinction between racial discrimination [which they condemned] and racial segregation [which they sought to maintain]. They felt that justice could be done if the South would simply live up to the equality spoken of in the phrase "separate but equal." Even more liberal Presbyterians such as the Rev. J. McDowell Richards, president of Columbia Seminary, hesitated to attack segregation as such. Almost all white leaders who addressed racial problems did so with a paternalistic attitude, referring to the plight of "the Negro," as if African Americans were a monolithic group. African Americans, too, sometimes spoke of themselves in such ways.[426]

Ending Segregated Synods in the PCUS

It is likely that many white Presbyterians in Mississippi during this period had never encountered an African American Presbyterian or knew that there were African American congregations in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. In 1939, the PCUS had only 47 "Negro congregations," as they were then described. Eight of these had been assimilated into predominately white synods and presbyteries. The remaining 39, mostly in Mississippi or Louisiana, were grouped into the segregated Snedecor Memorial Synod. Seven years later, it was reported that there were approximately 3,000 members in these churches, with 34 African American ministers. (By 1971, this number had fallen to 27.)[427]

[426] L. Nelson Bell, "What Next?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 10 (October 17, 1951): 2, 7; Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 82; see J. McDowell Richards, "The Golden Rule and Racial Relationships," *Presbyterian Outlook* 129 (April 21, 1947): 5-6; Mounger, "Lynching in Mississippi," 86-97, 109-13; cf. Morton Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

[427] Joel L. Alvis Jr., "A Presbyterian Dilemma: Ecclesiastical and Social Racial Policy in the 20th-Century Presbyterian Communion," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, eds., *The Diversity of Discipleship: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991): 187-208.

African Americans were subjected to humiliation in the PCUS simply on the basis of their color. For instance, at the 1942 General Assembly, when a Black commissioner, appointed to chair a Committee on Thanks, rose to present his report at the end of the meeting, several white commissioners protested that it was inappropriate for "a Negro" to express thanks on their behalf, and it was ordered that the stated clerk read the expression of thanks instead.[428]

Proposals in 1946 to integrate the ministers and churches of the Snedecor Memorial Synod into their contiguous, white-controlled synods occasioned vigorous objection from Central Mississippi Presbytery. A committee chaired by the Rev. G. T. Gillespie, president of Belhaven College, offered that, "With respect to the proposed dissolution of the Snedecor Memorial Synod and the transfer of churches and ministers in the constituent Presbyteries to the contiguous or overlapping white presbyteries, we recommend that the presbytery make the following answer: 'The Presbytery of Central Mississippi regards this proposal as unwise and believes that the arrangement would offer no real solution, but would add to the confusion of the situation.'" About the same time, the Methodist denomination acted to begin the integration of ministers and congregations from its all-Black Central Jurisdiction into the predominately white regional conferences, a process that would take years to complete, with the strongest resistance coming from Methodists of Mississippi.[429]

In 1950, Dr. Walter L. Lingle of Davidson College in North Carolina proposed the abolition of the Snedecor Memorial Synod. That year, a study prepared by the Rev. Alex R. Batchelor, executive secretary for the Division of Negro Work of the Board of Church Extension titled, "Shall We Dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod and Its Presbyteries?" was authorized by the Assembly for distribution. In response, a committee of Central Mississippi Presbytery reported that a majority of sessions it polled indicated a desire to keep the standing arrangements—that is, a separate African American synod and presbyteries, with the second-largest number voting to consolidate the synod but to preserve the separate presbyteries.[430]

The Rev. R. D. Bedinger, executive secretary of the presbytery's Home Missions Committee, sought to follow this middle course. He asked that he be permitted to record his vote as favoring the dissolution of the Snedecor Synod and retention of the African American presbyteries. He favored increased effort financial support for Negro work and, in 1954, as the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision loomed on the horizon, noted that, "Out of fear of integration, politicians were calling for new schools 'as a moral duty' and urged that the Church rise to its duty for the development of new churches among its African American constituency." Bedinger felt that the Church should at least do as much in its sphere as the civil authorities were doing in theirs.[431]

Efforts to end the separate synodical structure for African Americans were ratified by General Assembly action in 1951. The following year, the Snedecor Memorial Synod was dissolved, and its Ethel Presbytery that embraced the state of Mississippi was lodged in the Synod of Louisiana—thus, no Black commissioners would be attending meetings of the Synod of Mississippi. Ethel Presbytery was renamed as The Presbytery of Louisiana-Mississippi. Incorporation of the Mississippi churches of the Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery into the white-controlled presbyteries would take another 15 years. (In later years, separate presbytery structures for Native Americans and Koreans would persist in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.)

In 1953, the PCUS Assembly adopted a recommendation, "That the Church practice no discrimination in ministering to the needs of people, even as the love of God in Christ embraces all people alike." Montreat's trustees, after sharp debate, voted in 1959 to include Westminster Fellowship (the official PCUS organization for college students), under its provisions for adult conferences, but voted by a narrow margin to continue conducting youth conferences on a segregated basis. (Youth conferences at Montreat were desegregated in 1960, after which conservatives organized alternative conferences at other locations.) But problems persisted. African American

[428] Joel L. Alvis Jr., *Religion and Race: Southern Presbyterians, 1946-1983* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994): 1.

[429] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 15, 1946): 534.

[430] Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 13-31, 36; Alex R. Batchelor, *Jacob's Ladder: Negro Work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Atlanta: Board of Church Extension, 1953): 137, 141.

[431] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 16, 1951 and January 21, 1954).

college students attending a regional Westminster Fellowship Conference at Montreat as late as 1968 were still not allowed to swim in Lake Susan, with the result that all students attending resolved not to swim and voted to meet the following year at a site where each person could have the opportunity to participate freely.[432]

Summoning the Bell Hop at Assembly Inn

Two well-known white Mississippi-born Presbyterian ministers and their wives were checking into Montreat's Assembly Inn—one of them later quite outspoken for civil rights. Spying an African American wearing a white shirt and tie, they took him to be the bell hop and asked him to carry their luggage up to their rooms, which he courteously did. Only later did the two ministers realize to their extreme embarrassment that the gentleman they had summoned was one of the principal speakers at the conference they had come to attend. The Assembly Inn, as it turned out, did not employ bell hops.

Matters reached a boiling point for conservatives in 1954 when the PCUS Assembly adopted what Dwyn Mecklin Mounger has called, "an unprecedented resolution condemning enforced racial segregation as 'out of harmony with Christian theology and ethics' and commending the Supreme Court's unanimous decision that year against discrimination in the public schools." Indeed, as Andrew M. Manis has remarked, "May 17, 1954 [the date of the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation ruling], put in grave jeopardy a cornerstone of the Southern way of life. And the Southern Church, so often the custodian of Southern culture, found itself caught between Christian principles and institutional success." Two of the justices, William O. Douglas and Thomas C. Clark, were Presbyterians, and Clark had ancestral ties to Mississippi—his grandfather, General William C. Clark, had been a prominent planter in Madison County.[433]

Events in the PCUS General Assembly presaged the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court, for as William B. Sweetser Jr. has written, "Although the *Brown* decision applied only to public education, it was clear that the church needed to take a stand." The 1953 Assembly, meeting at Montreat, had—a year previous to the high court's ruling—adopted a generalized recommendation, "That the Church practice no discrimination." Following its adoption, a Virginia minister offered a second, more specific resolve, "That local churches be directed . . . to practice no discrimination within [their] fellowship or outreach." The Assembly referred this proposal to its Council on Christian Relations, with instructions to report to the next year's meeting.[434]

The high court's ruling could not have been a surprise. After several years of temporizing on the matter, the court had in 1950 outlawed segregation in graduate schools. Further action was sure to come. Recognizing that the court had the question of public school segregation on its docket, the report (published prior to the 1954 meeting) urged that the Assembly declare that, "enforced segregation of the races is discrimination which is out of harmony with Christian theology and ethics." It also urged the trustees of the Assembly's institutions of higher education to adopt policies opening their doors to applicants from all races. Synods and conference facilities were urged to consider similar measures. Sessions of local churches were also urged to admit persons to membership and fellowship "on the scriptural basis of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without reference to race." The report,

[432] Minutes of the Synod of Alabama (PCUS, 1950): 36-38; Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 88; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1953): 93; Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem," 22; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:538; Joel L. Alvis Jr., "The Montreat Conference Center and Presbyterian Social Policy," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 74 (Summer 1996): 131-39.

[433] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 193; Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 12, 86-87; Andrew M. Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Civil Rights and the Culture Wars* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2002): 93.

[434] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 318.

drawn up before the landmark Supreme Court decision was adopted by the Assembly on May 27—ten days after the high court issued its decision. The Assembly's vote was 239 to 169.[435]

These actions were clearly at variance with conservative, segregationist views in Mississippi and elsewhere. But the Church's strength lay in parts of the South more open to such change. In August 1954, *The Presbyterian Survey* pondered Presbyterian support for the General Assembly's action on civil rights. Despite some opposition to such editorial positions, subscriptions through the magazine's "Every Family Plan" had increased from 30,000 to 191,000. Though anecdotal accounts from Mississippi indicated that there was heated opposition to *The Presbyterian Survey*, clearly, Presbyterians across the wider South did not hinge their loyalty to the Church upon the question of segregation.[436]

According to Forest, Mississippi editor and State Sovereignty Commission publicist Erle E. Johnston, the 1954 Supreme Court decision was a shock to Mississippians, but not a surprise: "More than a year earlier, there had been rumors from Washington, that the Court was going to rule in favor of attorney Thurgood Marshall and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In fact, constitutional scholars noted that the High Court, through four different chief justices, had moved steadily toward *Brown*." South Carolina Governor James F. Byrnes had argued in January 1951, that "If we demand respect for state rights, we must discharge state responsibilities." Specifically, he urged that separate schools for Blacks must be made "truly equal" to those provided for whites. In an effort to head off an integration order from the courts acting from similar convictions and to weaken the case for desegregation, in November 1953, Mississippi Governor Hugh L. White called legislators into special session to consider a comprehensive program to improve the state's segregated schools, for the state's public schools, while racially separate, were hardly equal. The legislators, however, deferred funding the measure.[437]

Some Mississippi legislators, fearing that the federal government would outlaw segregation, then proposed an amendment to the state constitution to abolish public schools, should the government force desegregation. Voters approved the amendment in 1954 by a three-to-one majority. The legislature then approved another amendment that changed the wording of the state's literacy requirement for voter registration. Instead of requiring that voters either be able to read or interpret a passage from the state constitution as a condition of registration, the constitution was changed to require that prospective registrants read and interpret a section of the constitution—the choice of passage left to registrars in each county.

In 1956, the legislature abolished compulsory school attendance laws and passed a measure that made it unlawful to advocate "disobedience of state laws"—aimed at curbing public demonstrations and those who encouraged them. A conundrum was emerging as civil rights historian Charles C. Bolton noted, "The speed at which white moderates sought to make adjustments to existing racial arrangements was too slow and too limited for Black activists and too fast for committed white segregationists."[438]

The *Brown* decision accentuated emerging differences on race among Southern whites. In his impressive study of changing Southern attitudes toward race, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (2004), historian David L. Chappell remarked that even though Southern Baptists and their counterparts in the PCUS still worshiped in denominations separate from their sister communions to the North, they could not forge the same internal unity that characterized them a century before when they broke away along sectional lines. Southerners were no longer of one mind on issues of race. "Segregationists could not blame the de-segregationism

[435] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1953): 80-81; (1954): 187-98.

[436] James A. Overbeck, "The Rise and Fall of Presbyterian Official Journals, 1925-1985," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, eds., *The Diversity of Discipleship: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991): 98.

[437] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 3; The best record of the *Brown* decision's significance is Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of* Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).

[438] Charles C. Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi: A Biography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013): 92.

of their denominational assemblies on Yankee control." There was also a great contrast between the two eras as to the locus of agitation for change. In the 19th century, national political leadership in the period from the Missouri Compromise until Lincoln's election temporized and sought compromise, while abolitionists, and to a lesser degree, the churches pressed the issue, the Methodists and Baptists in the 1840s and the Presbyterians in 1857 and in 1861 setting an example of schism, which the country catastrophically followed as the Civil War unfolded. In the 20th century, it was largely the federal courts that drove change in segregation laws.[439]

The predominately white denominations were divided as to how to respond to the civil rights movement. This division did not form along geographic lines. Many segregation-minded Christians resided in Northern climes, just as there were Southerners who acknowledged the need for changed racial arrangements. Similar division of opinion was apparent in the two denominations that were centered in the Deep South, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the PCUS. Moreover, several prominent ministers who were received into PCUS presbyteries in the South during this period had been reared and educated in the North but argued for or acquiesced to segregation. Local congregations were perhaps more divided than denominational assemblies, almost all having some presence of both segregationists-at-all-costs and those prepared or at least resigned to accept change. As Chappell said, "The vocal opposition of lay segregationists and, in rare instances, politicized clergy, made the issue so controversial that most ministers seem to have tried to avoid it." As a result, with a few notable exceptions, the white churches in the South had little effect on the civil rights movement, and in some cases were roundly criticized as some felt they could and should have spoken out to prevent the violence that often flared in their communities.[440]

The Presbyterian Outlook, anticipating the coming Supreme Court decision, devoted a special issue, May 3, 1954, to "The Church and Segregation." Respected Presbyterians from different quarters of the Church contributed essays calling for reconciliation and change. PCUS Con-servatives were rankled that it was their Church and not the government that pressed the issue, thus accentuating the widening racial and theological divide among Presbyterians in the South.[441]

The PCUS was the first large religious body to meet after the *Brown* decision and thus was the first to issue a statement in response. Only days after the *Brown* ruling, the PCUS Assembly issued not one, but two statements that assaulted segregation. The first, titled, "The Church and Segregation," asked the Assembly to condemn segregation as unchristian, asserting that the Church should "lead rather than follow." The second, "A Statement to Southern Christians," affirmed the principle of racial equality, denied that the Bible advocated segregation, endorsed the *Brown* decision, and called upon PCUS members, "to lend their assistance to those charged with the duty of implementing the decision."[442] The report on racial segregation, prepared by the Assembly's Council of Christian Relations, had been a year in the making and was adopted by a sharply divided vote, with debate so intense that a motion was made (but defeated) to have the vote taken by a recorded roll call—an action that would have been unprecedented in the memories of those present.[443]

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[439] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[440] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 6.

[441] Special Issue: "The Church and Segregation," *Presbyterian Outlook* 136 (May 3, 1954).

[442] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 73.

[443] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 54, 194; see John R. Richardson, "The 94th General Assembly," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 15 (June 9, 1956): 6.

[444] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 73.

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From the PCUS Assembly's May 1954 "Statement to Southern Christians"

The Assembly's "Statement to Southern Christians" was written after the Supreme Court had delivered its ruling, it discussed the "doubts" and "fears" of many concerning the decision. It read, in part,

> For many Christians of the South, disturbed already by signs that segregation is on the way out, the recent decision of our Supreme Court has sharpened the horns of an old and painful dilemma. With one voice the Court has declared that sooner or later, by one means or another, segregation in . . . public schools must end. This ruling has come at a time when many Southern leaders are questioning the rightness of segregation on Christian grounds. Yet, in spite of these judgments that point toward the ideal, and which call for still greater changes in our social patterns, the fact remains that thousands of these Christians have their doubts. And their fears. . . .
>
> As Southerners who are also Christians, how shall we meet this situation? Let us look first at what is perhaps the most serious and influential doubt in the minds of many of the white members of our churches. This doubt, which might be called the crux of the segregation question for many white Southerners, is at its core religious and theological. It is a doubt as to the soundness of the Christian doctrine of man. It springs, in effect, from a certain view of the nature and worth and status of the Negro as a human being. This view holds that Negroes, though truly human and members of the family of God, are nonetheless inferior beings who belong to an innately inferior race. . . .
>
> The belief that some people are inferior to others because of their race or ancestry is nowhere supported by the Bible. It is nowhere set forth in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, or Paul or those of the great fathers of the Church. Like Hitler's 'master race' theory, the doctrine of Negro inferiority is a purely secular doctrine. It arose and gained favor in our country partly as a result of the slave system. . . .
>
> May it be that some in our region are fearful of integrating all our children into a single school system because of notions which are plainly out of place in a Christian mind and heart? Humility bids us raise the question, and growing numbers of our people are saying that, for themselves at least, their earlier view on this matter must be given up."

The report observed that "the courts have shown more sympathy toward the Negro than has the Church," warning that if this continued,

> The Church would 'find itself in the embarrassing position of having to adjust its sense of morality to measure up to the mores of the state.' It said that 'Christ was and still is ahead of the times; the customs, traditions, and laws' of a culture, and that 'The Church must strive to keep apace of its Master or become bereft of His spirit.' The Assembly affirmed that, 'Behind every set of written laws . . . is a code of ethics. . . . Behind every code of ethics is a concept of God so that, ultimately, every human relationship is determined by what a man believes about God. It will be a sad day for the Church if these three levels of relationship should be inverted, that is, if our belief in a personal God should permit us to foster a

[445] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 54, 194; see John R. Richardson, "The 94th General Assembly," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 15 (June 9, 1956): 6.

> relationship inferior to that which impersonal law demands. If this should happen, the Church would lose its status as the conscience of society, its intangible, controlling and quickening force.[446]

The Assembly declared that "The Christian's conduct toward others must be guided by the law of neighborliness which seeks the welfare and happiness of all people." The statement urged Southerners not to judge African Americans as a race, but "on the basis of their character and ability as individual men and women." A principal signer of this statement was the Rev. Frank H. Caldwell, president of Louisville Seminary, a son of the First Church at Corinth, Mississippi.[447]

The last part of "A Statement to Southern Christians" had a subhead, "The Christian Faith and Communism." It called upon the Church to "reject denunciation by hearsay, rumor, and vilification on the basis of unproved charges, hysterical spread of suspicion and distrust, and careless charges and defamation of character without the full investigation of the facts." As such, the PCUS was taking its stand alongside Princeton's John A. Mackay who, as moderator of the U.S.A. Church had issued a forceful letter to his constituents warning of the dangers posed by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his allies who were alleging without proof that Americans who disagreed with their views were communists.[448]

At their meetings following the 1954 Assembly, the Synods of Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia supported the Assembly's position on desegregation. The Synods of Appalachia, Florida, and North Carolina added their endorsement a year later. An attempt to reverse the 1954 statement on race was defeated by a vote of 293 to 109 in the 1955 Assembly.

In some ways, the PCUS took a more hopeful view of the *Brown* decision than did President Eisenhower, who had famously joined the Presbyterian Church at the beginning of his presidential term. According to Stephen Ambrose, the president thought Southerners might "virtually cancel out their public education system," beginning private schools to which state money would be diverted. He feared such a plan would not only handicap African American children but would work to the detriment of so-called "poor whites" in the South. Eisenhower personally wished that the court had upheld the older "separate but equal" standard and said so in private on several occasions. The president, who had commanded a segregated army in World War II (he had left the military before President Truman's desegregation order), refused to give the *Brown* decision a public endorsement, declining even to say that he thought segregation to be morally wrong. With regard to desegregation, he said in January 1955 that he believed in equality of opportunity for every citizen, but then the situation, "isn't quite as simple as that." Eisenhower said that he recognized, "the deep ruts of prejudice and emotionalism that have been built up over the years in this problem." The President's reaction to the court ruling and other matters indicated the ambiguous nature of race relations throughout the country. In these remarks, Eisenhower perhaps mirrored the opinion of many conservative Presbyterians that while discrimination in law was wrong, segregation as a social arrangement could be defended.

Segregationist Mississippian reaction to the Supreme Court decision was swift and harsh. On June 15, 1954, Major Fred Sullins, editor of *The Jackson Daily News*, wrote that, "No matter what delayed plan the Supreme Court may propose for enforcement of its decision, that plan is not going to be acceptable in Mississippi." William J. Simmons, a friend and adviser to the Rev. John Reed Miller, pastor of Jackson's First Church, who was to become the leader and spokesman for the White Citizens' Councils, declared, "We will fight, or we will submit. I propose we fight." In a letter to State Attorney General J. P. Coleman, Simmons urged that each Southern state call a referendum to ratify "acts of nullification" with regard to the Supreme Court ruling, and on August 1, 1954, former governor Fielding L. Wright issued a statement that Mississippi could preserve segregation by its "police power." Governor Hugh L. White hoped that Black leaders would agree to "voluntary" school segregation, if he and the legislature adopted his program to upgrade the quality of schools for African Americans. A few were

[446] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 189-94.

[447] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 194-95; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 188-89, 197.

[448] See Elwyn A. Smith, "McCarthy: Perspective and Prospect," *Christian Century* 71 (March 10, 1954): 298-99; James H. Smylie, "Mackay and McCarthyism, 1953-1954," *Journal of Church and State* 6:3 (Autumn 1964), 352-365.

even more vociferous in their opposition. Editor Sullins, a deacon in Jackson's First Presbyterian Church, who liked to say he had been converted during evangelist Gipsy Smith's 1924-1925 meeting in Jackson, declared in a front-page editorial entitled, "Blood on the White Marble Steps," that, "in the fight for white supremacy . . . there will be no room for neutrals or non-combatants . . . if you are a member of the Caucasian race. . . . You Are For Us Or Against Us."[449]

The controversy revealed divisions among pastors and congregations only blocks from one another. The Rev. J. Kelly Unger Sr., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Meridian, a PCUS congregation, wrote defending segregation. The Rev. Frank M. Cross, pastor of Meridian's Central Church, a congregation jointly affiliated with the PCUS and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., announced, "My church affirms that segregation is un-Christian. The State rules that segregation is unlawful. As a Christian and as a citizen, I accept and will abide by these decisions of my Church and State."[450]

Mississippi Presbyterians Support "Negro Work"

A certain bifurcation seemed to prevail among Mississippi Presbyterians with regard to race relations. Though most were segregationists, Southern Presbyterian conservatives, almost universally favored work among the African American community. The approach was paternalistic, never undertaken on the ground of social equality, nor do African American leaders seem to have been consulted. The type of work and the ideas behind it were subject to close scrutiny. Indeed, although whites claimed that they had many African friends and, though harmonious, close relationships did exist, these were not based on social equality and could hardly be—given the strictures and prohibitions that prevailed in the wider society. As Samuel S. Hill Jr. observed, "The white Christian's duty toward the Negro, as seen by the southern church [was] to convert him and befriend him (in a paternal framework), and not to consider altering the social traditions and arrangements which governed his (and everyone else's) life to so significant a degree." That this happened to play into prevailing social prejudices was one of the great ironies of Southern religious life. Many African Americans sensed the condescending attitude of whites who offered assistance and out of pride, as well as a sense of affront, rejected such assistance, even when it might otherwise have been welcomed. As time went on, more and more African American Presbyterians in Mississippi and elsewhere would confide that this was a limiting factor in the growth of the Presbyterian Church in the African American community.

In 1946, the PCUS Assembly voted to establish a separate "Negro Work" agency within the General Assembly structure. The Rev. W. H. McIntosh, pastor of Hattiesburg's First Church and a commissioner to the Assembly, opposed the idea—his remarks illustrating the bifurcation just described. He said, "Negroes are just lost, guilty persons like the rest of us until they are redeemed, and here we are proposing a new department. . . . The report has to do with social and political aims. . . . It involves the complete repudiation of the work of Home Missions we've been trying to do all these years. It involves the attention of the church in things that have heretofore been considered outside the church's work."

McIntosh's objections summed up the divide that was emerging in the PCUS—that African American persons should be given the gospel as individuals, but that it was not the Church's duty to address conditions in the society in which African American and white persons lived together. As Joel L. Alvis Jr., a historian of PCUS race relations, observed, "Presbyterians knew the statistical aspects of social inequality in the South. Members of the Synod of Mississippi in 1948 knew that their state spent $30 per student for the education of white children but only $9.70 per Black student, and that there were 1,360 white medical doctors in the state but only 37 Black medical

[449] Cited in James C. Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II*, 22.

[450] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 77.

doctors. Within this context the synod made a commitment to help sponsor more local Sunday School outposts and preaching points in black communities." This, the Church could and should do. But it could do no more.[451]

In 1954, the same year as the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Mississippi Presbyterians gave money to a campaign for work with African American PCUS congregations and colleges, the nearest educational institution to Mississippi being Stillman College in Alabama. Some argued that support for such facilities diffused the possibility that African Americans might wish to attend the white colleges and universities.

The Rev. Alex R. Batchelor, Assembly Secretary for Negro Work, noted in 1953 that the denomination's African American constituency was predominantly rural. A chief weakness in PCUS Negro Work, said Batchelor, was the fact that the denomination had few city churches to which Black congregations in rural areas could feed members. One city identified for development of a new African American congregation was Jackson. Batchelor noted that, "In Jackson, Mississippi as far as we knew there was not a single Negro Presbyterian." Following upon his suggestion several new congregations were organized for African American worshipers in several Mississippi cities and towns, including Faith Chapel, Jackson (1948), Calvary in Greenville (1952), and Community Presbyterian in Itta Bena (1961). Faith Chapel in Jackson was assisted by an organization called the Jackson Presbyterian Council, organized in 1944. The council operated apart from Central Mississippi Presbytery, which took no official part in the development of new African American churches, though the Rev. R. D. Bedinger, who became Superintendent of Home Missions for the presbytery, helped identify appropriate locations and properties for church development in Jackson. These churches were part of the Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery in Snedecor Memorial Synod.[452]

In this period, preaching services were held and plans for new African American church developments at Greenville and Itta Bena. The Rev. T. Russell Nunan, pastor, and the elders of the First Church were the moving force behind the effort to organize an African American congregation in that city to replace a congregation that was dispersed when their church was destroyed in the flood of 1912. The new Greenville body was organized in 1952 as Calvary Presbyterian Church. The Rev. L. S. Rounds was pastor.[453] The chapel at Itta Bena was sponsored by eight white Presbyterian congregations along U. S. Highway 82. It was intended to serve both the students and faculty of the Mississippi Vocational College for Negroes (now Mississippi Valley State University), as well as African Americans from the Itta Bena community.

East Mississippi Presbytery also gave strong support to efforts to organize work among African American residents of the area. A church was organized and minister supported at Okolona, and outpost Sunday schools and Vacation Bible Schools held in Corinth, Columbus, Pontotoc, and West Point. Elders of the presbytery who led this effort were elders Jameson C. and Paul T. Jones of Corinth and Ed Edens of Okolona. At least two missions operated in Corinth. The Tishomingo Street Mission was directed by Miss Janice Biggers, under the direction of the Rev. J. P. Simmons, pastor of the Corinth Church. Another mission in a different neighborhood, called the College Hill Mission, was started by Mrs. J. D. Bigger Jr. High school students and members of the Westminster Fellowship at Mississippi State College assisted the effort at various locations. The church at Okolona took the name Garden of Eden—in honor of Mr. Edens who had labored so long to gather this congregation and strengthen its work. The presbytery also engaged the help of Dr. Batchelor. African American ministers who served in this work were the Revs. Joseph B. Rodgers, John W. Rice Sr., and L. A. Bayne. In 1949, the Men of the Church of

[451] See LeeAnn G. Reynolds, *Maintaining Segregation: Children and Racial Instruction in the South, 1920-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

[452] Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 13-31, 36; Alex R. Batchelor, *Jacob's Ladder: Negro Work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Atlanta: Board of Church Extension, 1953): 137, 141.

[453] Graves, *Churches of St. Andrew*, 29; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 21, 1954); "Calling all Presbyterians—Central Mississippi Presbytery: Season of Church Extension, September 26-October 23, 1955." Published by the Church Extension Committee.

East Mississippi Presbytery assumed financial responsibility for this work. During the early 1950s, elder R. G. Kennington of Jackson's First Church took special interest in the Central Presbytery's Negro Work.[454]

Some supported complete separation of the races in church meetings. Whereas Black commissioners had been welcomed to the PCUS Assembly on a fully integrated basis in 1950 and steps were being taken to integrate the churches of the Snedecor Memorial Synod into the majority white synods, the Rev. Henry B. Dendy of *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* was arguing that it would be better if there were a separate Black Presbyterian Church. Shortly thereafter, the Rev. Horace L. Villee, pastor of the Columbus Church and longtime chair of the presbytery's World Missions Committee, brought a memorial to East Mississippi, October 11, 1951, calling for the Assembly to establish "an independent negro [*sic*] church." The presbytery did not approve the overture.

Mississippi Presbyterian Responses to the 1954 General Assembly

Not usually one to lead the way, the PCUS had taken a remarkably strong position in its support for the *Brown* decision. *The New York Times* wrote that the PCUS had been "the first major Protestant group in the South" to urge its congregations and institutions to desegregate, and as Dwyn Mecklin Mounger has remarked, the Assembly statements of 1954 "were vastly different from its 1944 pronouncement, which had called for the maintenance of 'certain social customs of long standing and universal recognition' in order to preserve racial 'identity.'"[455]

Not all in PCUS pews agreed with the denomination's high court or its more liberally inclined synods. Across the Assembly, the session of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church—the state's largest PCUS congregation—was perhaps the most outspoken in its criticism of the Assembly's actions. On June 6, 1954, less than a week after the Assembly had closed its sessions, the First Church session unanimously adopted resolutions setting in print their conviction, "that in this matter the General Assembly did err," and stated, that this Church will not follow the recent advice of the General Assembly urging non-segregation." It stated that "segregation of the races is not discrimination," declaring further, "that this Church shall, with good-will toward all men, maintain its traditional policy and practice of distinct separation of the races." The *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* reported that the First Church's resolution was "one of the first" to rebuff the pronouncements of the Assembly. Other PCUS congregations took similar actions, but because the Jackson statement was released to the local papers and the church press, it received wide publicity.[456]

When the conservative Meridian Presbytery (PCUS) met—according to the Rev. Arthur M. Schneider of Pascagoula—a member of Bay Street Church in Hattiesburg rose to speak. He wanted to condemn the Assembly's actions but offered language that "was too strong even for Meridian Presbytery." Though the moderator tried to control the discussion, it "quickly degenerated into [a discussion condemning racial] intermarriage." The presbytery adopted a resolution that deplored the Assembly's action and refused "to accept said recommendation as wise, or binding upon our consciences." (The resolution was approved 55 to 8, with three recording a protest in the minutes.) Meridian Presbytery requested the General Assembly to "instruct the agencies of our Church to refrain from publishing articles pro or con regarding the abolition of segregation of the races," as well as to abolish the Division of Christian Relations. Other Mississippi presbyteries took similar actions, and the Presbytery of Central Mississippi requested that the Assembly "reconsider and rescind" its declaration. The Synod of Mississippi used the same language in asking by vote of 62 to 40 that the Assembly repeal its statement. A handful of ministers at

[454] Minutes of East Mississippi Presbytery (April 21, 1948, July 20, 1948, April 19, 1949; April 9, 1953); see detailed history in the presbytery minutes (April 18, 1950); Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (May 20, 1965): 15-16.

[455] Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S." *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 68; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1944): 151.

[456] "Local Church Balks at Integration Edict," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (June 11, 1954): 1-2; "First Church of Jackson, Miss., Declares Itself on Segregation," *Southern Presbyterial* 13 (July 7, 1954): 8; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:540; Lucas, *Blessed Zion*, 107; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 122.

the synod's meeting spoke against this action, but as Hodding Carter III observed, "None of these did so from the position of a convinced integrationist."[457]

The Rev. Walter Fontaine Hall, pastor of the Indianola Church (1948-1954), faced repercussions within his congregation. He had been a commissioner to the 1954 PCUS Assembly. As reports of the Assembly's endorsement of the Supreme Court's desegregation decision filtered back to Mississippi, an elder of the congregation phoned him demanding to know how he had voted. Hall stated that he had voted his conscience. "Yes" or "no," the elder persisted. When Hall revealed that he had voted for the resolution, the elder and others mounted a successful effort to have him removed from his pastorate on the basis of his vote in the Assembly.[458] By contrast, the Synod of Arkansas commended the General Assembly's 1954 statements and actions to its institutions and conference grounds, and to all local churches, "for their careful and prayerful study." The Synod of Louisiana took similar action, declaring the 1954 statements as, "the most significant action of our Assembly in many years." Resolutions in the same spirit were adopted in the synods of Kentucky, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. A similar measure failed by just ten votes in the Synod of Alabama.[459]

Other objectors to the Assembly position on segregation included Tom Glasgow, a North Carolina elder who had accused E. T. Thompson of unorthodox belief, and called for tabling of "The Church and Segregation" report—a motion to this effect was lost when put before the Assembly. John R. Wallace, a commissioner from Memphis Presbytery, expressed shock at the report's statements. According to Wallace, "The Church will not be benefited by forcing this issue." The Assembly voted 236 to 169 to adopt in full the opinions and resolutions of "The Church and Segregation."[460]

The Supreme Court's decision perhaps reinforced a determination in some minds to keep the South—its churches, its ways, and its schools—separate and apart. Regarding the "Statement to Southern Christians," an unidentified Mississippi pastor, speaking at the Assembly opposed the paper, saying, "The whole philosophy of our idea of the Negro has been called in question. . . . I do love the Negro . . . but some of us believe that God made two races. . . ."[461] According to E. T. Thompson and others, strongest reaction to the Assembly's resolutions came from Mississippi. Mounger has noted that, in general, more conservative Presbyterians across the South desisted from strong criticism of the Assembly's calls for desegregation; however, this was not true in Mississippi, where resistance to integration in schools and churches would persist for a decade and more and calls for "massive resistance" to integration would emerge, occasioning riots, fire bombings, and the resultant loss of life.[462] As Dupont wrote, "Because religion now jeopardized segregation, segregationists called on religion to defend it." After the *Brown* decision, "Many Mississippi segregationists were groping to find religious support for their determined stand against the Supreme Court and the federal government for its usurpation of states' rights."

Significantly, only a few ministers were willing to give vigorous support to the most ardent segregationists. In fact, David Chappell has remarked that, "Segregationist propaganda often condemned the southern white clergy en bloc for its failure to stand up for the white South's cause." He noted that, "segregationists condemned their

[457] "Presbytery of Meridian against Union," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 13 (November 3, 1954): 19; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1955): 36-40, 76-79, 166-70; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (Spring 1955): 62-63; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 74-75; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 123; Hodding Carter III, *The South Strikes Back* (New York: Doubleday, 1959): 121.

[458] Dwyn M. Mounger to R. Milton Winter, December 13, 2013.

[459] Minutes of the Synod of Arkansas (PCUS, 1954): 30; Minutes of the Synod of Louisiana (PCUS, 1954): 394; see Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 165-66.

[460] *Presbyterian Outlook* 86 (June 7, 1954): 5-6; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954), 1:12.

[461] *New York Times* (June 2, 1954): 37; *Presbyterian Outlook* 136 (June 7, 1954): 5-6.

[462] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:540; Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 160-61, 163-64; see Jane Dailey, "Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after *Brown*," *Journal of American History* 91 (June 2004): 119-44; Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950s*, Revised edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

churches . . . for exactly the same sin as Martin Luther King condemned them in his 1963 'Letter from the Birmingham Jail'—for neutrality in a moral crisis."[463]

Many, if not most, white ministers quietly supported segregation. Others said desegregation was a way of life that would require a long time to change. No doubt there were a large number of Mississippi ministers who agreed with the Supreme Court, but most of them kept such thoughts to themselves. At its meeting in November 1954, the Rev. Robert H. Walkup, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Starkville, urged the synod to ignore recalcitrant voices in the state and support the General Assembly's position. However, the Rev. G. T. Gillespie, the recently retired president of Belhaven, offered a substitute report that denounced the Assembly's recommendations. He argued that segregation lay outside the realm of ecclesiastical concern and asserted that the synod could not "place the stamp of its approval upon [the] recommendation that churches . . . admit persons to membership and fellowship without reference to race." The synod voted down Walkup's report, accepting Gillespie's recommendations instead. Moderates registered strong disagreement, and 39 of the synod's 99 commissioners signed a dissent communicating their position to the Assembly.[464]

—Belhaven College

Former Belhaven president G. T. Gillespie emerged as a vocal supporter of segregation following his retirement from the college in 1954.

The synod sent an overture to the 1955 Assembly, stating that the previous year's Assembly recommendations concerning segregation "obviously represents *ex parte* and partial discussion of this vitally important question and fails to take into account some of the most pertinent facts which underlie the long-established policy of our Church and the profound conviction of millions of thoughtful and fair-minded Christians in the South." The Assembly, however, declined to rescind the actions of 1954.

Following the suggestion of segregationist editor James J. Kilpatrick, of Richmond, Virginia's *News-Leader*, the Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia legislatures adopted interposition laws. Georgia went further to declare the Supreme Court's decision "null, void, and of no effect." The Mississippi legislature passed a resolution of interposition that authorized the state to prohibit the implementation of the *Brown* decision in Mississippi.

[463] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 80; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 6.

[464] "Presbyterians Back Segregation, Giving Okay to Sharp Report by Dr. Gillespie," *Jackson Daily News* (December 5, 1954):7; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 75.

Governor J. P. Coleman was forced to accept wording he opposed, that *Brown* was "invalid and of no lawful effect," though the legislature did restrict its call for resistance to "lawful, peaceful, and constitutional means." The legislature also created a State Sovereignty Commission with broad powers to carry out the intent of that resolution and promote "states' rights."[465]

Continuing Allegations Concerning Civil Rights and Communist Infiltration

Fears of communist infiltration and charges of communist influence persisted longer among anti-civil rights Southerners than among the U. S. population at large. The session of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church entered the debate as late as 1957, challenging the PCUS Assembly's recent adoption of a Council on Christian Relations report, "Freedom—the Christian Concept." While the report aligned itself on behalf of prized American freedoms—freedom to learn, freedom of speech, freedom to assemble peaceably, freedom of fellowship, and freedom from want—the Jackson elders asserted the Church's freedom to do its work without government interference. They criticized the Assembly's report for being "oblivious to the fact that Communism is an enemy of freedom," for ignoring "the ruthless methods employed by the Communists of turning the people against the existing form of government," and of "pitting class against class and race against race."[466] But if segregationist whites feared communist infiltration of African American civil rights movements, many African Americans lost confidence in the white-controlled churches' willingness to support the civil rights effort. After this, as E. T. Thompson observed, African American leaders no longer relied "on moral suasion or on religious sentiment."[467]

Clearly, the majority of PCUS ministers and congregations were troubled by the prevailing racial mores. Some PCUS judicatories in the Border States and a few in the Deep South embraced change. Others did not. Resistance crystallized in certain areas: in the East Alabama Presbytery, in the Presbytery of Memphis, and in the Synod of Mississippi, as many PCUS ministers and congregations, on principle, refused to address gravely divisive issues in their congregations and communities.

As the Rev. Frank A. Brooks Jr. recalled,

> Meetings of the Synod of Mississippi were filled with controversy and serious disagreement during those years. In addition to the stated meeting each year, called meetings of the synod were not unusual. One of the issues confronting the synod was the whole matter of racial integration as it might possibly affect not only our churches but our schools and society at large. This issue was beginning to loom heavily on the horizon. As it was discussed and debated tempers flared and speeches came to be almost violent at times.[468]

By 1956, the Citizens' Council organization grew to 85,000 members in 65 chapters throughout Mississippi, spreading also to other states. It claimed a national membership of 250,000 by the end of the year. Where possible, the Citizens' Councils enlisted the Church's help. The councils recognized that ignoring the religious positions put forward by the higher councils of the larger denominations would open the way for dangerous ideas to be put forward. Robert B. Patterson, a council official, exhorted lay leaders to "straighten these churches out." The Gulf Coast Chapter solicited "all clergymen occupying pulpits in this community for their continued support of racial segregation in our churches." The appeal stated that, "We . . . feel ourselves entitled to the honest support of our own pastors in this frightening situation." Mississippi Presbyterian ministers such as G. T. Gillespie and John Reed Miller spoke on behalf of the Citizens' Council. The Rev. A. H. Freundt Jr., pastor at Forest, wrote for its

[465] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990): 367-68, 406.

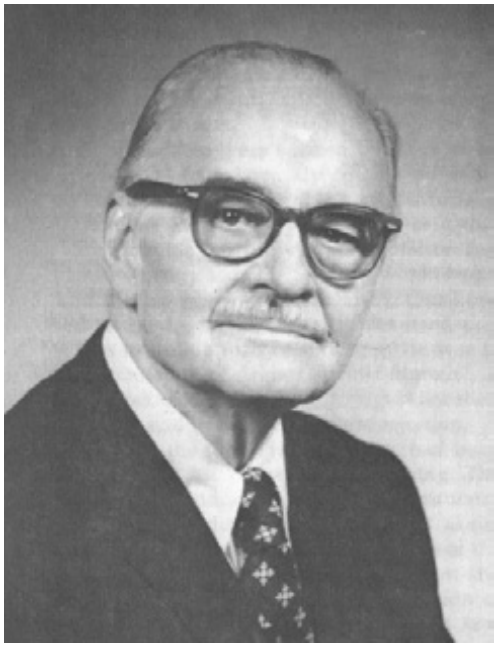
[466] "Statement Adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 19, 1957): 8-10.

[467] See Ernest Trice Thompson, "Christian Relations Among the Races," *Presbyterian Outlook* 132 (August 20, 1951): 13-14.

[468] Frank A. Brooks Jr., in Jane Hines, ed., *The Bob Walkup Storybook* (Nashville: Hart Street Press, 1995): 118.

magazine, *The Citizen*, and the Rev. W. A. Gamble, stated clerk of Central Mississippi Presbytery, served on the board of the Jackson Citizens' Council.[469] The statewide organization of the White Citizens' Council was headed by W. J. Simmons, later a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson. Simmons went on to leadership in the national Citizens' Council movement.[470]

Although they were by no means alone as clerical advocates of segregation, Mississippi news editor Wilson "Bill" Minor termed the Revs. W. Douglas Hudgins, pastor of Jackson's First Baptist Church and John Reed Miller, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in the same city, "the patron saints of the Citizens' Council." In 1961, when Carleton Putnam, an executive with Delta Airlines and lay student of racial anthropology, came to Jackson to address a Citizens' Council rally, several of the city's prominent Presbyterian ministers and elders were listed among the members of the host committee.[471]



The Rev. John Reed Miller, the highly articulate pastor of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church, emphasized personal evangelism, but was outspoken in his opposition to reunion with the U.S.A. Church, as well as racial integration; however, he did not refer to the subject of race in his published sermons.

The Citizens' Council movement brought forth criticism and scorn from across the nation, with accusations that it was the "middle-class Klan," but in 1957, the session of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church defended the right of "citizens'" groups to assemble, noting that "There are numerous citizens' councils and groups throughout the South that are composed of Christian citizens of the highest type, and that these groups not only do not resort to or condone violence, but on the other hand, are actually deterrents to the use of violence."[472]

For his part, John Reed Miller was an articulate, sometimes eloquent and highly respected preacher who had been president of the predominately African American Knoxville College (an institution of the United Presbyterian

[469] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 93-94.

[470] Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-1964* (Revised edition, Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Stephanie Rolph, *Resisting Equality: The Citizens' Council, 1954-1989* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018).

[471] Cited in Charles Marsh: *God's Long Summer, Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997): 232; "These Distinguished Community Leaders Served on the Carleton Putnam Dinner Committee in Jackson," *The Citizen* (November 1961).

[472] "Statement Adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 19, 1957): 8-10.

Church of North America) prior to his coming to Jackson. His sermons were attended by large congregations, and their reach extended by weekly television broadcast. On the occasion of his retirement in 1979, he published three volumes of sermons. The sermons, which sought to address the problems of hearers, were topical in nature, many of them based on Old Testament texts and focused on personal religion, carefully avoiding specific reference to current events. It was clear that Miller read widely, quoting mostly the great preachers of an earlier day. While acknowledging that immense problems existed in the wider society, Miller insisted that the necessary first step was transformation of individual hearts through faith in Christ. While not ruling out the intervention of government to allay social ills, he insisted that the Church's job was to preach the gospel to individuals. He did not refer to the subject of race in his published sermons. When Miller spoke in secular settings, he did so in the capacity of a private citizen, not as a representative of the Church.[473]

Council literature, which included articles by out-of-state ministers such as the Rev. Bob Jones, founder of the arch-segregationist Bob Jones University in South Carolina, included charges that liberal ministers were "effeminate," "deluded," and "educated beyond their capacity to understand or communicate." Such ministers were not harmless "do-gooders" but apostates and heretics who embraced socialism, and indeed, communism, in their embrace of equality and social mixing of the races. Council speakers and publications implied that advocacy for racial justice arose from a kind of theological liberalism Mississippians had decried for decades and urged that the religious defense of segregation was intimately tied to the defense of orthodox conservative, Christianity. Significantly, there were those who saw the argument for racial integration as but a Southern manifestation of the same liberalism that led ministers in Northern denominations to deny tenets of historic Christianity, such as the inspiration of scripture or the Virgin Birth.[474] Two prominent symbols buttressed the appeal of the Citizens' Councils. The battle flag of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia was prominently displayed at meetings, and the song, "Dixie," was often played or sung at rallies.[475]

Senator Eastland gave strong support to the White Citizens' Councils, agreeing with their stand for school segregation and enlisting their help in opposing atheistic communism. At its first state wide convention in December 1955, he spoke of integration as "a radical, pro-Communist political movement in this country."[476]

The 1958 PCUS Assembly reaffirmed the standing PCUS position on racial matters. In reaction, almost the entire May 1958 issue of the Citizens' Council magazine examined the "doctrine of integration" in religious denominations. Under the heading, "Southern Churches Urge Mixing," the issue featured articles condemning Southern Baptist and PCUS literature and alleging the rise of communist influence within these churches.[477] Thus, events developed, positions solidified, and as the Rev. William G. McAtee, who grew up in Shaw, Senatobia, and Brookhaven, attended Southwestern at Memphis, and later served two pastorates in Mississippi—recalled, "There was no middle ground for those who held this fundamentalist position, making theological dialogue impossible with those of us who believed differently about the redemption of the social order." To accept integration was to

[473] John Reed Miller, *The Anchor of Our Hope* (Jackson, Miss.: Evangelical Pulpit Publishers, 1979); *Disciples in Disguise* (Jackson, Miss.: Evangelical Pulpit Publishers, 1979): 157, 161; and *Taking Heaven by Storm* (Jackson, Miss.: Evangelical Pulpit Publishers, 1979): 22-23, 120, 124.

[474] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 96.

[475] There was irony in the inaccurate use of the Army of Northern Virginia's battle flag by Mississippi segregationists, belying lack of historical knowledge. Historians of Confederate flags and their use report that the so-called rebel flag was an *oblong* red banner that bore the blue cross of St. Andrew, edged with white with 13 white five-pointed stars. It was a modification of the Confederate battle-flag, first used by General Robert E. Lee's army, later called the Army of Northern Virginia, which was *square*, similar to one designed by P. G. T. Beauregard's men, and erroneously, but popularly called "the Stars and Bars." Flags similar to the ones first used by Lee and Beauregard served as the second and third Confederate battle flag. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Flags_of_the_ Confederate_States_of_America. https://acwm.org/blog/myths-misunderstandings-confederate-flag/

[476] Dupont, "Mississippi's Religious Red Scare," 18.

[477] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 96; "Southern Presbyterians Reaffirm Anti-Segregation Stand," *Religious News Service* (April 30, 1958); "Racial Declaration," *The Christian Index* (May 8, 1958).

yield to the forces that would undermine Christianity, capitalism, and the fabric of everyday life. To criticize at any point would make the whole Southern "way of life" vulnerable to collapse.[478]

William Winter remembered the Citizens' Council's beginnings:

> For a few weeks there was an ominous quiet as if no one really could fathom what the appropriate reaction should be. There was no word from the White House in support of the decision. That was unfortunate, given the fact that President Eisenhower was enjoying enormous popularity in the South at that time. Many of the young Southern business and political leaders had served under him during World War II. He had a credibility that would have provided a large umbrella against the gathering storm.
>
> The first flashes of lightning appeared in the Delta sky in July. . . . The first meeting to resist the decision took place in Indianola in the heart of the Delta. Some of the area's leading white citizens were there. A few days later a larger gathering was called for Greenwood. As the state representative I was invited to go by some of my Grenada County constituents who were understandably concerned about the decision. The auditorium of the city hall was packed. There were lurid descriptions by some of the planters of subversive black activity, particularly as it related to alleged plots to register to vote. Several suggested as a first step the abolition of the public schools. The consensus was that people had to be made to understand that if they just stuck together, they could find ways to circumvent by state action the decisions of the federal courts. I stood up and cautiously expressed doubt that it was that simple. I recalled that the Supreme Court had said that it was impermissible to try to accomplish indirectly what had been forbidden to be done directly. This was obviously not what most of the audience had come there to hear. One of the area's most respected lawyers told me privately after the meeting that he thought I was right, but he was the only one. It was increasingly apparent that we were in for several long, hot summers. I did not realize it at the time, but I was witnessing the birth of the White Citizens' Council. Before the year was over, it would be organized in a number of counties, and would begin to be a major political force in the state. I respectfully declined overtures to join.[479]

Southern white churches had usually tried to steer a non-political course. With the exception of their vigorous calls for legislation prohibiting the prohibition of alcohol sales or the operation of railroad trains on Sunday, the churches tried to steer clear of controversial matters about which politicians debated. When they did speak to matters of race relations, their pronouncements were restrained in contrast to those of segregationist politicians. Presbyterians in particular assumed a somewhat class-based Olympian perspective, sidestepping at all costs the sort of race-baiting and demagoguery that many in politics felt was necessary to win approval from the lower ranks of the electorate.

This silence both encouraged and undermined the segregationist cause. David Chappell has written that, "Scholars who notice the apolitical stance of the southern churches generally see it as de facto support of segregation," but he argues that by the 1960s, segregationists needed more than de facto support. They needed the assistance of institutions "with more cultural authority than an opportunistic politician to embrace their cause." Chappell argues that, with a few exceptions, the churches largely failed to provide this. Indeed, compared to the support that Confederate slave owners received from their region's leading theologians and pulpiteers—men who literally argued for and preached the South into a civil war—white supremacists in the post-World War II South largely failed to persuade their churches to give their cause active support—this in a time when the churches enjoyed massive influence and enjoyed wide participation and support in the communities where they were located. Indeed, the number of ministers and noted lay church leaders who wrote and spoke for the Citizens' Councils

[478] William G. McAtee, *Transformed: A White Mississippi Pastor's Journey into Civil Rights and Beyond* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 75-76.

[479] William F. Winter, unpublished memoirs, excerpted from Andrew P. Mullins Jr., *The Measure of Our Days: Writings of William F. Winter* (Jackson: Published by the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, University of Mississippi, Distributed by the University Press of Mississippi, 2006): 122-23.

was small. By contract, the movement for racial equality and civil rights was strongly backed by the African American churches—with many members and ministers giving the effort all the support they dared, many of them at immense risk to their personal safety and the safety of their ecclesiastical property, and if the large, predominately white denominations did not give great support to the civil rights quest, they passed carefully reasoned resolutions, sent volunteers to march alongside African American activists, and except for occasional protests against disorder in street demonstrations, did not in any way seek to undermine it.

Other Mississippi Churches React to *Brown* Ruling

The strife among Mississippi Presbyterians in this period was paralleled in other communions. Although the predominately white national Methodist and Episcopal bodies, along with Southern Baptists and the PCUS, endorsed the *Brown* ruling, their Mississippi organizations, except for the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Churches, defied denominational policy.[480] A few days after the 1954 PCUS Assembly, the Southern Baptist Convention met and declared that the Supreme Court decision was in harmony, "with the Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men." The resolution urged Christians to "conduct themselves in this period of adjustment in the spirit of Christ." The SBC vote was roughly 9,000 in favor with 50 opposed. Unlike the PCUS, Southern Baptists did not address the issue of segregation within church bodies. An editorial in *The Jackson Daily News* termed the Baptist Convention's action "deplorable," and noted that the Southern Baptist Convention was not strictly "Southern" any longer.[481]

As in Jackson's First Presbyterian Church, strong objections appeared in the city's First Baptist Church, where the Rev. Douglas Hudgins spoke in opposition to the convention's vote. Hudgins had insisted at the convention that his name be recorded in opposition. Soon afterward, a resolution by the First Baptist Church of Grenada warned that such actions would cause "withdrawal of this and other churches" from the SBC. Some Baptist congregations cut off funding to agencies of the SBC, such as its Christian Life Commission, which espoused positions with which many Mississippians disagreed. The Jackson First Baptist Church's deacons also adopted resolutions opposing the convention's actions but did not specifically bar African American visitors from their church as did the session of First Presbyterian.[482]

The Methodist Council of Bishops, meeting the following November, also issued a statement of support for the *Brown* decision, noting that the Supreme Court ruling was "in keeping with the attitude of The Methodist Church." Methodists, like the PCUS, had segregated governing bodies. The Methodist Church's Central Jurisdiction, which included African American congregations in Mississippi, was a mid-level governing body similar to the Snedecor Memorial Synod of the PCUS. Mississippi bishop Marvin Franklin told his congregants that the Bishops' Resolution would have "little or no effect" on Mississippi Methodists.[483]

Researcher Carter Dalton Lyon noted that in Mississippi, "Churches were both a sanctuary for segregation and

[480] Mark Newman, "The Mississippi Baptist Convention and Desegregation, 1945-1980," *Journal of Mississippi History* 59 (Spring 1997): 1-31; Mark Newman, *Getting Right with God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

[481] "Southern Baptists Defend Segregation Ruling of Court," *Jackson Daily News* (June 5, 1954): 1; "A Deplorable Action," *Jackson Daily News* (June 6, 1954): 8; "The Churches Speak," *New South* 9 (August 1954): 1-4.

[482] See "Non-Segregation Action by Baptist Convention Is Not Binding Here, Leaders Say," *Jackson Daily News* (June 6, 1954): 1; "Grenada First Dissents," *Baptist Record* (17 June 1954); Carter Dalton Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar from the House of God: The 1963-1964 Church Visit Campaign to Challenge Segregated Sanctuaries in Jackson, Mississippi" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mississippi, 2010): 17-18. Cited with permission. Portions of Lyon's dissertation appear in condensed form in Carter Dalton Lyon, *Sanctuaries of Segregation: The Story of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017).

[483] Ellis Ray Branch, "Born of Conviction: Racial Conflict and Changes in Mississippi Methodism, 1945-1983" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, 1984): 42-46; Jack Winton Gunn, "Religion in the Twentieth Century," in McLemore, *A History of Mississippi*, 2:484-85.

a space to exert influence in the national debate over integration." As William G. McAtee recalled his boyhood in a Mississippi Presbyterian manse, "I was brought up in a loving family that showed compassion and respect for those who shared our separate but unequal culture. I learned by example to exhibit acts of kindness in tangible ways. But there is more to loving one's neighbor than that. We Southern Presbyterians over the years were good at sending 'missionaries to the ends of the earth to convert the heathen' as a gesture of loving our neighbors at a distance, but we had some blind spots when it came to how we expressed that love for neighbors at home. Both relationships became tangled when the notion of justice got introduced to our evangelistic efforts." But unlike white social conservatives before them, Southern segregationists of the civil rights era tended to regard their own denominations as advocates of the changes they opposed. Both the Southern Baptists and Presbyterians had gone on record in favor of desegregation. Chappell remarks that these figures were even more striking in light of the near unanimity of elected officials against desegregation at that time. The question thus arose for Mississippi members of the PCUS as to whether political opposition or church teaching would settle the issue in their minds.[484]

In the summer of 1954, the Rev. Duncan M. Gray Jr., vicar of Calvary Episcopal Church in Cleveland, along with James Raspberry, professor at the predominantly African American Okolona College (Raspberry was the father of later nationally syndicated columnist William Raspberry), and Dudy Noble, wife of the athletic director at Mississippi State College, served on a committee of the diocesan Department of Christian Social Relations chaired by the Rev. Duncan Hobart, rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Jackson. Gray authored a statement, published as a pamphlet entitled, "The Church Considers the Supreme Court Decision," which, after consideration, was approved by the bishop, the Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray Sr. The statement, which gained national attention, rejected the idea that desegregation was simply a political question outside the Church's purview and argued that important theological and religious ideas were involved, so that from the standpoint of democracy, it had to be recognized that, "In many ways the public schools form the very cornerstone of our great democracy. In order for democracy to work, the people must be educated. They must be prepared for the exercise of honest and intelligent citizenship, and this irrespective of race, creed, or color."[485] The statement went on to say that it would be wrong to make "the opportunity for a good education be dependent on one's economic or social status, [for] basic to the very theory of public schools is the assumption that one's opportunity for an education is not to be determined by his ability to pay for it, whether in the form of tuition, or in the form of taxes. . . . This is a basic premise of a Christian democracy. If we find ourselves resenting this, then we should examine our attitude toward democracy itself."[486]

Turning to the religious side of the question, the Episcopal statement said that, "The Supreme Court's decision has to do with human beings," asserting that, "The great ethical principles of the New Testament proclaim the sanctity of the human personality as that which takes precedence over every other human consideration." Furthermore, "Man, be he white or black, is made in the image of God," so that, "Our attitude toward the Supreme Court's decision is, therefore, essentially a religious question, since it concerns what we really believe about God and His creation. It concerns what we believe ourselves to be in relation to God and in relation to other human beings." Gray and his committee said that "From the standpoint of Christian principle, we cannot believe that the Supreme Court's decision was anything but just and right. In our Christian faith, as well as in our political creed, we are committed to the principle of all men's equality before God and before the law," asking, "How, then, could we have expected any other verdict from the highest court of a professedly Christian and democratic country?" Gray noted that segregation was a tradition of longstanding, and acknowledged that "customs and traditions of such long standing are not overthrown overnight." He concluded that, "Christian principles are not always easy to face," but urged that both white and Black had the responsibility to work toward a Christian solution.[487]

The Cleveland printer who set the pamphlet in type did so only on condition that the name of his or the name

[484] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 24, 53-58; McAtee, *Transformed*, 243; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 5-6.

[485] Citations in Araminta Stone Johnston, *"And One Was a Priest:" The Life and Times of Duncan M. Gray, Jr.* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011): 136-37; Gardiner H. Shattuk, *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003): 66-67.

[486] Johnston, *And One Was a Priest*, 136-37.

[487] Johnston, *And One Was a Priest*, 137-38.

of his firm not be mentioned, and the pamphlet was subsequently reprinted in *The Church News*, the Mississippi Episcopal paper. The national offices of the Episcopal Church gave it wide circulation. The next year, Gray authored a statement on "The Ethics of Jesus," for the Episcopal Church's Southern Province that stretched from North Carolina to Louisiana that stated that declaring in a subsequent publication endorsed by his Church's southern province, that "Segregation is incompatible with the Christian gospel." It continued that,

> Ultimately this complicated problem will be resolved in a Christian manner only when we can accept every human being as a child of God, equally precious in his sight and equally the object of his love and concern." It reminded readers that, "We must never forget that in Christ, God identified Himself with every human being, be he great or small, powerful or weak, white or black," and urged that, 'Our treatment of our fellow man, whoever he may be, is an action directed toward God Himself.' The National Council of Churches subsequently issued a resolution, based in part on the Mississippi statement.

Thus, as Gardiner Shattuck, a historian of the Episcopal Church's efforts toward better race relations, observed, "Thanks principally to the efforts of Duncan Gray Jr. and the Committee on Christian Social Relations on which he served, Mississippi Episcopalians at the diocesan level . . . responded quickly and positively to the idea of desegregation."[488]

That November, the Rev. Bernard V. Munger, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Corinth, wrote to Gray, thanking him for the pamphlet and his work on it, adding that, "My remarks at the Synod of Mississippi, on two occasions, concerning the very same thing, were not appreciated by any considerable number of my brethren. However, I have never felt that numbers on my side was a good criterion for judgment as to the truth of my witness. I will continue to make it, even if the number with me decreases!" (In 1957, Gray was called as rector of St. Peter's Church in Oxford, and the following year, Munger went from Corinth to serve as dean of the chapel at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.)[489]

In some ways, Mississippi Baptists made greater progress than Presbyterians in facing the race issue, for though Baptist opposition to integration was fierce, they dealt with the challenge apart from schism. As early as the 1950s, a few Baptist leaders, such as Joe T. Odle, editor of *The Baptist Record*, the state's Southern Baptist newspaper, and University of Mississippi chaplain Will D. Campbell, urged a more progressive direction. Like the PCUS, Mississippi Baptists gradually modified their stance, moving from a convention resolution opposing *Brown* to support for "obedience to the law" (while condemning protest marches and other displays of pro-integration sentiment). "We have moved through the last 40-odd years as if through a millennium," noted Wilmer C. Fields in a 1983 Baptist assessment of Southern religion.[490]

Whereas many Mississippi Presbyterian assessments of the Supreme Court and General Assembly decisions were negative, the reaction in other parts of the Church was more moderate. The August meeting of the Association for the Preservation and Continuation of the Southern Presbyterian Church, organized to oppose the Plan for Union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., did not condemn the Assembly's action. Referring to the Supreme Court's decision, it called upon influential individuals, "to quietly lead the way in needed changes of attitudes on the part of members of both races. . . ." Dwyn Mecklin Mounger, a historian of PCUS racial attitudes, noted that after May 1954, fewer articles defending segregation appeared in Presbyterian publications.[491]

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[488] Johnston, *And One Was a Priest*, 145-46; Shattuck, 67, 120.

[489] Johnston, *And One Was a Priest*, 141.

[490] Thomas L. Connelly, *Will Campbell and the Soul of the South* (New York: Continuum, 1982); Newman, 1-32; Wilmer C. Fields, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Religion in a Changing South," in *Dixie Dateline: A Journalistic Portrait of the Contemporary South*, ed. by John B. Boles (Houston: Rice University Studies, 1983): 65.

[491] *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 13 (September 1, 1954): 4-5; see Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church," 667.

Civil Rights and Church Union

In May 1954, the Ninety-fourth General Assembly of the PCUS, meeting in Montreat, gave its final approval to the Plan of Union, submitting it to the presbyteries for their consideration and vote. Approval of three-fourths of the PCUS presbyteries would be needed. Three weeks before the Assembly submitted the Plan for Union, the Supreme Court had issued its sweeping school desegregation decision. The effect of court's action upon subsequent events in Mississippi and the life of the PCUS has been closely studied, especially its likely effect upon the question of PCUS union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Still, there were clues. When *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* reported the action of Meridian Presbytery rejecting the Assembly's 1954 statement on race, it titled the article, "Presbytery of Meridian against Union."[492]

The Rev. Robert Price Richardson Jr. recalled ministry in the era of church union debates and the Supreme Court's desegregation decision. Richardson was a new graduate of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond when he began his ministry at Hazlehurst in 1954. As he remembered:

> My ordination examination before Mississippi Presbytery was held on June 15 at a presbytery meeting at Centreville, Mississippi. I passed it without any problems whatsoever. They must have felt that I was true and blue, ready for ordained ministry.
>
> My ordination and installation service was held in the Hazlehurst Church on June 20, at 7:30 p.m. Serving on my commission were: my Dad of course, by invitation [Richardson's father, the Rev. Robert Price Richardson Sr., having been evacuated from China in 1950, was then an administrator at Southwestern at Memphis.]; the Rev. W. H. McAtee from Brookhaven, the Rev. J. Walton Stewart from Natchez, the Rev. Virgil Bryant of Columbia, the Rev. E. G. Boyce, a minister from Chamberlain-Hunt Academy in Port Gibson, and Dr. Jenkins, an elder from Port Gibson. Pat [Richardson's wife] and I entertained the commission with a dinner at the manse. After the evening service, the church held a reception for everyone attending. . . .
>
> We made friends with Mac [the Rev. A. M.] and Muriel Hart, in Fayette, Mississippi. He was fresh out of Columbia Seminary, starting out in his first pastorate also. We discovered quickly that we were kindred spirits in our social and theological views and opinions. Our friendship with other ministers, Dr. McAtee, Dr. Boyce, Virgil Bryant, and others, were strong ones in the presbytery, and our life and work were enhanced and valued by those friendships.
>
> Church politics and debates ensued that year, particularly at synod meetings. The vote on church reunion was coming up in the fall, and the numbers of ministers, like me, who were proponents of reunion, were few and far between. Needless to say, the vote taken that fall in the presbyteries, including Mississippi Presbytery, was overwhelmingly opposed to reunion.
>
> But there was a larger issue in the society as a whole. 1954 was the year of the Supreme Court desegregation decision. . . . This ruling in favor of school integration was one of the most significant strides forward that this country has taken in favor of civil liberties. Ruling in favor of integration was the red flag for school systems all over the country, and particularly in the South. . . .
>
> As citizens and as Presbyterian Christians, we were evermore reminded of the practice of segregation as a continuing social problem facing the church, the presbytery, the Synod of Mississippi, not to mention the state of Mississippi, and the entire southern states of our country. At the meeting of the Synod of

[492] "Presbytery of Meridian against Union," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 13 (November 3, 1954): 19. For a comprehensive treatment of the *Brown* decision, see Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); James C. Cobb, *The Brown Decision, Jim Crow and Southern Identity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005); Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton, *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education* (Fayetteville: (University of Arkansas Press, 2008).

> Mississippi, one of the debates centered on a theological paper being drafted and up for a vote, either in 1954 or 1955. The paper entitled, as I best remember, "The Christian Defense for Racial Segregation," written by the Rev. Guy T. Gillespie, [retired] president of Belhaven College, and a revered leader in our synod. Thank God the paper was never adopted by the synod, although it was received and commended to the churches for study.
>
> When the time came for our session in Hazlehurst to debate church reunion and the segregation paper, my elders and I discussed the issues long and hard. And although I was usually a minority of one—sometimes there were two—in session debates, my elders, who could not support my position, certainly continued to support me personally and to give me their respect. That happened over and over again in that Hazlehurst session during the four years that I served them as pastor. They would not agree with my theological perspectives on the social issues of the day—church union and race as two glaring examples—but they honored my position. They loved me and respected me as their pastor.
>
> On the church reunion issue, Sammy Caldwell [Samuel C. Caldwell Jr., son of the church's longtime pastor and a local businessman], a staunch Southwestern alumnus, and I, were the only voices on the session to support reunion. And even though we were always in a minority, the session did vote to support a financial campaign for Southwestern, not always an easy task in southern Mississippi. Sammy Caldwell, a product of a liberal arts education, was always firm in his advocacy of the freedom of the pulpit. . . . It was Sammy Caldwell's presence and leadership that molded my own theological thinking and views, and which enabled me to speak convincingly and courageously on the moral and social issues of the day.[493]

In 1954, the plan for a three-way union of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and the United Presbyterian Church of North America was defeated, with all five of the Mississippi presbyteries casting their votes in opposition. Conservatives maintained that their opposition was based on theological concerns, but the vote and underlying issues were studied by the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard, which concluded that the segregation controversy was the major source of the opposition vote.[494]

Though the degree of influence this matter had is debated, it is clear that many conservatives opposed both racial integration and union with the U.S.A. Church. But segregation was by no means the only issue. As Sean Michael Lucas, a historian of Jackson's First Church has written,

> The intractable issues of Civil Rights heightened the already explosive atmosphere around reunion. That is not to say that reunion with the Northern church foundered because of the General Assembly's pronouncement on segregation. Far from it: the primary issue that defeated reunion was the doctrinal looseness of the Northern Presbyterian Church, especially on issues of biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. However, race provided a context within which the debates over reunion occurred. For example, a 1947 letter sent by a Committee of 100 elders of the Synod of Mississippi not only arraigned potential reunion for its doctrinal laxity; they also pointed out the Northern (and Southern) churches' involvement with the Federal Council of Churches, which was advocating the iniquitous F.E.P.C. [Fair Employment Practices Commission] law to bring about immediately full social equality of all races, negro, white, and all others in the South. This was a place where the cultural context trumped the otherwise strong biblical knowledge and insight of conservative southern Presbyterians.[495]

Each Presbyterian and each presbytery had reasons for supporting or discountenancing the union of the three great American Presbyterian bodies. As in all great questions, matters of personal interest were bound up with

[493] Robert Price Richardson Jr., *Wrapped in Love: A Lifelong Journey* (Nashville: privately published, 2005): 89-92.

[494] See Sanford M. Dornbusch and Roger D. Irle, "The Failure of Presbyterian Union," *American Journal of Sociology* 64 (January 1959): 35-55; David M. Reimers, "The Race Problem and Presbyterian Union," *Church History* 31 (June 1962): 207-09; Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 60-61; Rycroft, 149-53.

[495] Lucas, *Blessed Zion*, 107-108.

visionary hopes as well as deeply embedded fears and prejudices. In Mississippi, the desire of dominant white leaders to keep the African American population in subjugation was never far from the surface, affecting every discussion. Discussions of doctrinal difference were perhaps brought forward by some to dignify the argument, serving as a convenient cover for less noble concerns, for in these decades, many Southerners were resentful of attempts to rouse their consciences over deplorable social conditions in their midst—especially when these efforts came from those they perceived as self-righteous, ill-informed, sanctimonious meddlers, seeking to impose reform from the safe distance of their far-away locales.

The South and Mississippi in particular—was in no mood to be told what it should do. The memories of the 1861 Assembly and the Gardiner Spring resolutions and all that was bound up in such things lived on. This, as well as the longstanding Presbyterian aversion to change, likely doomed all hopes for union among the PCUS presbyteries in Mississippi long before the 1954 vote was taken. The PCUS would have to face nearly 30 years of struggle and division before a more propitious time presented itself, and even then, only a minority of Mississippi Presbyterians would find themselves ready to find their permanent home in a reunited Presbyterian Church.

The Rev. Guy T. Gillespie, the Curse of Canaan, and the Spirit of the Gospel

Dwyn Mecklin Mounger has argued that there were two distinguishable positions in the Southern Presbyterian Church during this period: "preservers" who were opposed to church pronouncements on social issues and who tended to favor the status quo in race relations, and "reformers" who increasingly expressed concern for the problems of society and called for changes in the enforced segregation of the races.[496] The two sides could not marshal equal support. African American churches provided strong motivation for activists in the civil rights movement, but white churches in Mississippi failed to provide similar support for their members who argued on behalf of segregation. David Chappell argued, therefore, that the civil rights movement was propelled by a moral force that recalcitrant whites could not marshal in their churches for their beliefs.[497]

The white-controlled churches of Mississippi were among the last religious bastions of segregation. Before the historic Supreme Court ruling of 1954, the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church had adopted anti-segregation pronouncements and, as Mounger noted, "By far the strongest opposition came from the Presbyterians of Mississippi." The Presbytery of Meridian, on October 19, 1954, criticized the Assembly, stating that they "do hereby deplore the action of the General Assembly in its recommendation concerning segregation and do hereby refuse to accept said recommendation as wise, or binding upon our consciences."

The Synod of Mississippi, in session on November 5, 1954, resolved 60 to 48 that it could not "in good conscience" comply with denominational recommendations for church desegregation. It rejected the General Assembly's statement that "enforced segregation of the races is discrimination." The synod did not advocate discrimination but held that maintenance of "separate but equal" arrangements in society could be both equitable and beneficial. Echoing Civil War-era assertions that slavery was a purely civil matter with which the Church had no right to interfere, the synod described the controversies surrounding segregation as a "controversial political issue . . . secular" in nature and outside the Church's jurisdiction. The closeness of the vote indicated the friction then existing among Presbyterians in the state.[498]

Retired longtime Belhaven College president, the Rev. G. T. Gillespie was a representative of the "preservers" in Mississippi Presbyterianism. He and others in the state continued to hold their anti-segregation positions for years after the *Brown* decision was announced. The Synod of Mississippi, at an adjourned meeting in the First Presbyterian Church of Greenwood in November 1954, heard an address by Gillespie who asserted that the integration movement was a communist plot and that it would lead to racial intermarriage and the development of

[496] Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S.," 38-68.

[497] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 9-43.

[498] "Presbyterians Back Segregation, Giving Okay to Sharp Report by Dr. Gillespie," *Jackson Daily News* (November 5, 1954): 7.

a "hybrid race." He argued on biblical, scientific, and utilitarian grounds, that segregation was "one of nature's universal laws," adducing statements by Jefferson, Lincoln, and Booker T. Washington to support the idea of racial segregation. Gillespie's address before the synod was offered as a minority report to an overture calling the General Assembly to reverse its support for school desegregation. Gillespie supported that effort and wished to give his reasons for doing so.[499]

The address was a remarkable production. It was in many ways misunderstood and misused. It was significant for the things said, as well as for things it did not say. It had a dramatic impact on events both secular and religious. Gillespie echoed the sentiments of the Rev. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, longtime pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans and a revered member of the Synod of Mississippi (New Orleans was part of the Synod of Mississippi in Palmer's day), as well as others who had framed biblical defense for Southern slavery. In his widely published Thanksgiving Day sermon, delivered November 29, 1860, which was widely credited for rallying the forces of secession, Palmer had said, "The worst foes of the black race are those who have intermeddled on their behalf. We know better than others that every attribute of their character fits them for dependence and servitude" and that "Freedom would be their doom."

Older members of the synod would have studied Palmer's writings in seminary. Gillespie's argument came with certain differences—principally because he was careful not to claim that the Bible specifically endorsed a system of segregation such as was then practiced in the American South. In this sense, Gillespie, in good Presbyterian fashion, may have hoped to blunt some of the blatant racism of certain Southern apologists. Yet, if this was his aim, it appears to have been unsuccessful.[500] Gillespie's report was not formally adopted but was "received and commended to churches for study." It was reprinted in *The Natchez Times* (November 22, 1954), several of the church papers, as well as by the Mississippi White Citizens' Council. It received wide distribution throughout the nation and was seen as a galvanizing force for those resisting integration.[501]

The exegesis and implications of Noah's postdiluvian curse of his grandson Canaan, as described in Genesis 9:18-27, were vigorously debated in this period. According to the King James Version, the passage read,

> [18]And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. [19] These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. [20]And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: [21] And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. [22]And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. [23]And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. [24]And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. [25]And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. [26]And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. [27] God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

[499] For analysis and critique of biblical arguments used to support Southern racial segregation, see Donald G. Miller, "Shall We Then Hear the Word of God and Do It?" *Presbyterian Outlook* 137 (March 14, 1955): 10-14; cf. Billy Don Sherman, "The Ideology of American Segregationism" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966).

[500] Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Thanksgiving Sermon, Delivered at the First Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, on Thursday, [November] 29, 1860* (New York: G. F. Nesbitt & Co., Printers, 1860). See Stephen R. Haynes, "Race, National Destiny, and the Sons of Noah in the Thought of Benjamin M. Palmer," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (Summer 2000): 125-43; Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[501] G. T. Gillespie, "A Christian View of Segregation," reprint of an address before the Synod of Mississippi of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., November 4, 1954 (Greenwood, Miss.: Citizens Council, 1954); *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 5, 1957): 7-12; Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 53-55; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:540.

Proponents of racial segregation and African American inferiority assumed God approved of these words which Noah uttered, and that Black persons were descended from Canaan, as well as that as well as that the curse extended to all of Canaan's descendants and that it was imputed to succeeding generations. Scholars such as Mounger set forth what they felt was a proper view of this text and others cited by segregationists, including Acts 17:26: "God hath made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the bounds of their habitation," as well as the curse following the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), and verses prohibiting Hebrew intermarriage with pagan neighbors, alleged to support theories of racial purity. Still, as late as 1958, the United Daughters of the Confederacy—an organization which claimed many members among the Presbyterian women of Mississippi—declared that promotion of racial intermarriage, which it termed "miscegenation"—was "a Communist objective."[502]

Reformers criticized interpretations of the doctrine of the Church's spirituality that excused Presbyterians from efforts to achieve racial equity or that would justify exclusion of African Americans from white churches, pointing to Old Testament passages that condemned the sins of organized society, as well as the Hebrew temple. They pointed to Moses' condemnations of slavery as practiced by Pharaoh, as well as Isaiah and Amos's rebukes of Judah and Israel for their national sins. In particular, they cited Malachi 2:10, "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" New Testament examples were also brought forward—John the Baptist's denunciation of sins by the Pharisees and Sadducees—James's rebuke of the rich exploiters of labor, and Paul's demand for apology from the leaders of Philippi because of the violation of his and Silas's rights as Roman citizens (Matthew 3:7-8 and Luke 3:7-8, Acts 2:23, James 2:5-6, Acts 16.37). The PCUS Assembly's Department of Christian Relations quoted the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), emphasizing its command to "teach all nations," saying it was the Church's responsibility, in obedience to Christ's injunction, to teach people how to carry out Christian love, "in the social sphere, as well as in the individual sphere, in the home . . . school and . . . Church, in industry and in politics, in racial contacts, and in international affairs."[503] Reformers claimed that scripture portrayed political and social ethics as the responsibility, not only of individuals as Christians, but of the Church as a whole. An editorial in *The Presbyterian Outlook* called for "not only conversion of individuals but conversion of a social order," and the Synod of Alabama recognized the Church's responsibility to help create a "redemptive society."[504]

Gillespie presented a spirited argument before the Synod of Mississippi advocating Black inferiority and the continuation of segregation. He declared that "The problem of race relations is not new. It is as old as civilization. Wherever in the history of the race two peoples of significantly different characteristics have come in contact with each other, or have sought to occupy the same area, a problem of race relations has inevitably developed." Like many Southern conservatives, Gillespie believed the civil rights movement "coincides with the worldwide movement for racial amalgamation which has its fountainhead in Moscow" and was subversive to American society. He identified Karl Marx and the communists as aggravating the situation, saying that "The problem has . . . been complicated by the world-wide spread of Karl Marx's doctrine of internationalism and the classless society, combined with the vigorous propaganda of Soviet Communism to bring about a world revolution and the breakdown of all national and racial distinctions and to effect the complete amalgamation of all races." According to Gillespie, segregation was American because state constitutions contained it. It was simply part of "the natural order of things." To integrate was to violate the laws of nature itself, as well as the ordinances of God. The question was not simply political or pragmatic, for Gillespie averred that segregation was one of nature's universal laws:

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[502] See Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," 52-73; see also Everett Tilson, *Segregation and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958).

[503] See Frank Price, "The Larger Prophetic Mission of the Church," *Presbyterian Outlook* 128 (November 18, 1946: 5-7; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1946): 166; see Thompson, "The Christian and the Race Problem," *Presbyterian Outlook* 43 (October 25, 1944): 13-14; "Jesus Among People of Other Races," *Presbyterian Outlook* 131 (March 21, 1949): 14.

[504] "The Right to Do Something," *Presbyterian Outlook* 131 (May 2, 1949): 8, Minutes of the Synod of Alabama (PCUS, 1950): 36.

> In all nature, the herd instinct prevails to a greater or less[er] degree…Animals by instinct mate only with their own kind, perpetuating their own species. . . . No intermingling or crossbreeding with animals of widely different characteristics takes place except under abnormal or artificial conditions. The old adage, 'Birds of a feather flock together,' only expresses a fact of common observation and universal experience. There are many varieties of the bird family, but under natural conditions, so far as know, bluebirds never mate with redbirds, doves never mate with blackbirds, nor mockingbirds with jays. The fact that man also is a gregarious animal and that human beings everywhere and under all conditions of life tend to segregate themselves into families, tribes, national or racial groups, only goes to prove that all human relations are regulated by this universal law of nature.

After invoking racial pride as opposed to blind race prejudice, which he condemned, Gillespie argued that segregation tended to promote progress: "The phenomenal development of the racehorse, the draft horse, the beef and dairy breeds of cattle, furnish impressive evidence that segregation promotes the development of progress. . . ." He pointed to the ancient Greeks, who because of their comparative geographic isolation, enjoyed a distinction from other peoples of the world "whom they designated as Barbarians." He also pointed to British development, again by insulation on their home island, of "a vigorous racial stock and a virile and homogenous culture." Finally, he pointed to recent developments in Israel where, "In spite of many shortcomings, and in spite of being both the exponents and the victims of bitter racial prejudice, the Hebrew people like the waters of the Gulf Stream in the midst of the ocean have achieved a mission and a destiny which would have been impossible had they abandoned the principle of segregation and become integrated with the nations which hemmed them in on all sides centuries ago."

Gillespie advanced his argument by appeal to a series of separations in the Old Testament. He admitted that these did not give a mandate for or against segregation but maintained that it was not "unchristian." Gillespie argued that the Bible contained considerable evidence from which "valid inferences" could be derived in support of segregation as a development of the divine purpose: Beginning with the families of Cain and Seth (Genesis 4:11-26), he pointed to the demoralization resulting from the intermarriage of the Sons of God, "that is, the descendants of Seth," with the daughters of men, "who were apparently the descendants of Cain (Genesis 6:1-7). He referred to the divisions of humanity after the Noahic Flood (Genesis 9:18-29), the origin of linguistic differences in the aftermath of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:19), the call of Abraham to a separated life (Genesis 12-25), as well as prohibitions against the mingling of diverse things, such as cross-breeding of cattle, planting of mixed seeds, and the mixing of wool in linen in a garment (Leviticus 19:19). He invoked the warnings of Moses against intermarriage with other peoples (Deuteronomy 7:3), as well as Ezra's condemnation of mixed marriages (Ezra 9-10). Gillespie believed that for 2,000 years, segregation had been imposed on the Hebrew people by divine command, and when this command was broken, the punishment had been extremely severe. He said, "There is certainly no ground for the charge that racial segregation is displeasing to God, unjust to man, or inherently wrong." Gillespie viewed "segregation [as] a well-considered and time tested American policy . . . the best solution to America's racial problems."

While noting that the Gospel as proclaimed by the first apostles knew no racial bounds, he saw no program in the teaching of Christ "to bring about amalgamation of the Jews and the Samaritans or of any other races." He believed,

> That Paul had in mind the absolute uniformity of believers in external relations and the wiping out of all distinctions of race, nationality, social status, sex, or cultural heritage, is disproven by the fact that Paul never ceased to identify himself as a member of the Jewish race, and he made very practical use of his right to Roman citizenship. He recognized the master-slave relationship prevalent in Greek and Roman society and enjoined obedience to the reciprocal duties arising therefrom. He also clearly recognized the status assigned to women by social custom and denied to women some of the privileges and functions exercised by men in the churches under his supervision.

Still, Gillespie saw no reason to believe that segregation as the South knew it was in conflict with the spirit and teachings of Christ and the Apostles. Gillespie saw in the picture of the Church Triumphant given by the Seer of Patmos (Revelation 7:9-10), an affirmation that racial distinctions carried over into eternity, where could be seen people from "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues," all united in their praise to God and the Lamb, "yet each preserving its own distinctive genius and virtues."

"The recent decision of the Supreme Court notwithstanding," Gillespie argued that respected figures of American history had supported racial segregation, invoking Jefferson's autobiography (1821), that: Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. . . ." and Lincoln's statement in debate with Stephen A. Douglas, September 18, 1858, "I will say then, that I am not now, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. . . ."

Gillespie closed by saying that, "It may perhaps greatly be deplored that the great plans of Lincoln for the segregation of the races, and for the equitable and permanent solution of the American race problem were frustrated and defeated by his tragic and untimely death. In retrospect we may well count it the greatest disaster which ever befell the South and the Nation."[505]

The White Citizens' Council printed Gillespie's address in pamphlet form and gave it wide distribution. The Gillespie address came to be recognized as "the certified Christian defense of segregation." *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* printed Gillespie's address as a "fine and rational" elucidation of the periodical's own viewpoints. *The Presbyterian Outlook* printed the speech alongside responses from the Union Seminary faculty, who critiqued its scriptural and logical foundations. No statement commended by Mississippi Presbyterians had ever received such wide circulation.[506]

Gillespie was a 1911 graduate of Union Seminary in Virginia, and his paper occasioned strong reaction from the faculty there. Two professors, Donald Miller and E. T. Thompson, as well as other alumni, penned refutations. Thompson wrote with a consciousness of arguments put forward by the much-revered Southern Presbyterian theologian Robert L. Dabney in his *Defence of Virginia, and Through Her, of the South* (1867). Indeed, Gillespie seems to have used arguments put forward by Dabney in his *Defence of Virginia*. In his essay, "The Curse was Not on Ham," Thompson sought not simply to answer Gillespie, but to deal a blow to Dabney's assertions.[507]

Thompson wrote that,

> There are many people who believe that God has condemned the Negroes to a position of permanent inferiority, that in his curse upon Ham, he doomed the descendants of Ham, i.e., the Negro race, to a position of perpetual servitude. This interpretation of Genesis 9:24-27 became the common one in the South in the days preceding the Civil War and remains a popular one until the present time. A slight examination of the passage, however, along with the aid of any good commentary or Bible dictionary, will make it clear, however, that this interpretation is based on three mistaken ideas. The record shows [that] (1) the curse is pronounced by Noah, not by God—and there is a difference; (2) the curse is pronounced on Canaan, and not on Ham; and (3) the descendants of Canaan are the Canaanites (see Genesis 10:15-19), white tribes every one of them.[508]

Gillespie, however, maintained his interest in the subject and contributed an article to *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* in 1957 called, "A Southern Christian Looks at the Race Problem." He believed that, "comparatively little

[505] Citations from G. T. Gillespie, "Defense of the Principle of Racial Segregation," *Presbyterian Outlook* 137 (March 14, 1955): 5-9.

[506] G. T. Gillespie, "A Christian View on Segregation," An Address Delivered Before the Synod of Mississippi at Greenwood (Winona, Miss.: Citizens' Councils, 1954): 2-3; Robert P. Rayner, "On Theological Grounds: Hattiesburg Presbyterians and the Civil Rights Movement" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 2009): 20.

[507] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain,* 155-56.

[508] E. T. Thompson, "The Curse Was Not on Ham," *Presbyterian Outlook* 14 (March 14, 1955): 1-3, 7.

of the opposition to the principle of segregation has come spontaneously from the pureblood Negroes, or from the masses of the Negro population; more strenuous opposition has come from the Negroes of mixed blood, who have migrated from the South to the Northern cities, and who bitterly resent the tensions and discriminations to which they find themselves and their families subject in their efforts to secure recognition in Northern communities." He saw the crux of the matter as a choice between maintenance of "the Anglo-Saxon ideal of racial integrity maintained by a consistent application of the principle of segregation, and the Communist goal of amalgamation. . . ."[509]

In one of his later essays, Gillespie asserted that the crux of the whole racial problem "boiled down to one simple question: Is it desirable that social relations leading normally to intermarriage and ultimate racial amalgamation should be encouraged and approved; or is it more desirable, in the interests of all parties and society as a whole, that racial intermarriage should be discouraged or prohibited, and that each race should be able to preserve its own racial integrity." The assertion of the nobility of preserving each race's purity was complicated by the parallel segregationist argument that the white race was inherently superior.

Gillespie believed that "black groups each have their own distinctive physical and cultural characteristics" that would not meld with whites. "The intelligent farmer does not allow his dairy and beef breeding stock to run in the same pasture, otherwise he would down grade his herds, and have only a herd of scrubs or mongrels." The same principles would apply with even greater force "to the mating of human beings with widely different types and cultural backgrounds." It was a matter of the greatest cultural importance, unleashing changes that once begun could not be undone. Gillespie argued that "the gradual integration and ultimate amalgamation of the white and colored races in the United States [would represent] a colossal blunder, a betrayal of unborn generations, and a monstrous crime against civilization."[510]

Gillespie defended segregation as a pattern that had evolved over time and had served both races well. He admitted that the system was far from perfect but believed that "the evils and injustices which have arisen under the system of segregation have been purely incidental and have not been due to any fallacy in the principle of segregation, but to the weakness and perversities of individual members of both races." Gillespie believed that abuses occurred in only a few localities and asserted that there was "no indication of any serious disturbance of the friendly relations existing between the rank and file of Negroes and whites throughout the South." Gillespie believed whites had grounds for resisting the implementation of school desegregation, for only if segregation were maintained would the society function to the present and future welfare of both races.[511]

Gillespie's arguments were questioned on political, social, and religious grounds. With regard to the charge that the civil rights movement arose from communist influence, few African Americans embraced communism, just as few would join the Black Muslim movement in a subsequent era—such ideologies were repugnant to the deeply-held Christian faith of most African Americans, particularly African Americans in the Deep South. Communists certainly did cite the existence of segregation in the American South as they sought to make their case to solicit non-white developing nations in alliance against the United States.

As *The Presbyterian Outlook* and other publications noted, Gillespie cast the problem as a tension between two races, Black and white, ignoring the fact that it was only in the 19th century that whites or African Americans were described as races; indeed, in the very city where he spoke, there were Jews, Italians, Mexicans, and persons of Chinese origin—all immigrants of more recent arrival than either the older white families or African Americans. Controversies in Mississippi in the decades previous to Gillespie's address revealed the difficulty of classifying such persons into either the "white" or the "colored" race.

To recognize such diversities would, perhaps, have made his Gillespie's argument too complicated. Gillespie's references to the animal kingdom, particularly his ornithological examples, ignored the fact that unlike birds, human beings of all races and tribes constituted a single species. Though the bird pairings to which he referred

[509] G. T. Gillespie, "A Southern Presbyterian Looks at the Race Problem," *Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 5, 1957): 8-12.

[510] G. T. Gillespie, "A Southern Presbyterian Looks at the Race Problem," *Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 5, 1957): 8-12. See Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

[511] Gillespie, "A Southern Christian Looks at the Race Problem," 9.

seem to have been based on differences in color, different species were involved. The greatest weakness of Gillespie's argument was that his racial theories were in close parallel to the discredited master race theory that had motivated America's opponents in the Second World War. It was telling that he referred to Greeks and Britons, but not to the Germanic peoples.

Most destructive to his argument, Gillespie's tract conceded that Jesus had taught not only the love of God for all, but the essential oneness of all Christian believers. In declaring that segregation "was one of nature's universal laws," Gillespie was reproducing virtually the same argument that preservers had traditionally used. Mounger asserted, however, that biblical arguments in defense of segregation were not often put forth from the pulpit, saying that quiet adherence to the status quo seemed to be more effective than excessive public efforts to justify the practice. Such practices seemed to accord well with the accepted Presbyterian emphasis upon dignity and decorum. As Carolyn Dupont has remarked, "The advance of biblical argumentation seemed more an afterthought to justify a way of life that was in place." Conservative Presbyterians seemed ill at ease bringing the Bible to bear on such discussions.[512]

Gillespie wrote carefully. Reading between the lines, it was clear that he argued principally on the grounds of custom, not with clear divine warrant. However, many who heard or read his words took more from what he said than his assertions allowed. Whether or not one agreed with his argument, Gillespie's contribution to the discussion was a conservative recognition that the matter of segregation could be debated on biblical and theological grounds, that it was, at root, a moral and religious question.

Following Gillespie's address, the synod voted to send an overture to the 1955 Assembly, asserting that the body had erred in adopting the statements of the previous year, citing the *Westminster Confession* (Chapter XXXI, section iv), that "Synods and Councils are to handle and conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical," and rejecting its call for integration of local congregations and denominational institutions. The synod stated that the Church should not "embroil herself in all manner of secular controversies" or "spend her energies in humanly devised plans for the reformation of society."[513]

Segregationist Association Organized by Mississippi Methodists

Mississippi Presbyterian actions opposing calls for desegregation were paralleled in other denominations. Segregationist Methodists were disturbed at the thought that African Americans might be present in their Conference meetings, and in March 1955, a meeting was held in Jackson's Robert E. Lee Hotel to form the Mississippi Association of Methodist Ministers and Laymen to Maintain Racial Customs in Churches, Schools, Conferences, and Jurisdictions (MAMML). The MAMML's founding came just days after the formation of the Jackson chapter of the White Citizens' Council. Laymen only were invited on the theory that they might be less susceptible to pressure from higher ecclesiastical authorities than clergy.[514]

Robert B. Patterson, executive secretary of the Citizens' Councils of America, who was present for the MAMML organizational meeting, stated that, "by organizing within churches, foes of integration could bring pressure on ministers to support segregation and change the position of state and national church organizations which have endorsed mixing of the races."

The Mississippi Association of Methodist Ministers and Laymen issued a response and asked congregations to state their position on integration by means of a secret ballot. The MAMML asserted that if Paul's "restrictions on women and on servants did not violate the spirit of oneness in Christ, then certainly our Southern system of race

[512] Dwyn M. Mounger, "Racial Attitudes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1944-1954," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 48 (Winter 1970); Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 31, 6.

[513] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (November 4, 1954).

[514] "Methodists Firmly Favor Segregation," *Jackson Daily News* (March 31, 1955): 1; "Methodists Battle Integration Ideas," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (April 1, 1955): 10; "States' Rights Group Here Set to Oppose Integration," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (March 25, 1955): 12.

relations—with its demonstrated benefits does not." Many members complained that church literature frequently raised the subject of integration and stated that, as a result, many congregations in the state had ceased to use it.[515]

Conservative Baptists employed a similar strategy. Baptist segregationists formed a similar organization, the Baptist Laymen of Mississippi, in an attempt to force the Mississippi Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention into silence on race relations. Like most Presbyterians, Mississippi Baptists gradually modified their stance, moving from a convention resolution opposing the *Brown* decision to a mid-1960s affirmation of support for "obedience to law" (while condemning protest marches and other displays of pro-integration civil disobedience). A 1968 survey revealed only six Southern Baptist churches in Mississippi with open-door policies, three of which had African American members.[516]

In early 1956, it was announced that 55 counties had organized Citizens' Councils had 75 organized chapters and had a combined statewide membership of over 75,000. Senator Eastland addressed a Central Mississippi rally at Forest on April 27, 1956. On the platform with the senator was the Rev. G. T. Gillespie. The White Citizens' Council not only published Gillespie's "Christian View of Segregation," but it also issued pamphlets titled, "A Jewish View of Segregation," and "Is Segregation Un-Christian?"[517] The Rev. D. M. Nelson, president of the Southern Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College, also wrote a segregationist tract that was printed and distributed in 1954 by the Citizens' Council. It stated in part that the purpose of integration was in keeping with communist goal, "to mongrelize the two dominant races of the South."[518]

The Rev. Morton H. Smith Echoes Gillespie's Segregation Arguments

The Rev. Guy T. Gillespie was not the only Mississippi Presbyterian to gain wide notice in support of racial segregation on theological grounds. In 1957, the Rev. Morton H. Smith, a Bible professor at Belhaven, repeated and expanded Gillespie's arguments for *The Presbyterian Journal*. The Women of the Church through their denominational leadership had requested E. T. Thompson to write their circle study book, which appeared as *Jesus and Citizenship* in 1957. Mississippi conservatives were disturbed by statements in the book, particularly those that appeared in a chapter entitled "Brotherhood and Race."

Although Thompson had dealt with this and related issues before, *Jesus and Citizenship* represented his most forceful statements in a church publication. As Thompson's biographer Peter H. Hobbie noted, "The cause of Southern conservative displeasure was clear: Thompson dealt directly with the issue of segregation. . . . After quoting the 1954 action of the General Assembly, he examined, as he had done so many times in [his *Presbyterian Outlook*] Sunday School lessons, how Jesus disregarded the social customs and taboos of his own day that he might reach suffering humanity."

Thompson wrote that the way of Jesus was hard for the women and men of the South. He offered encouragement in that the way was also difficult for the disciples of Jesus. He supported an enlarged role for government in meeting human need. Old fashioned neighborliness, he told his readers, was no longer enough. The needs of modern life meant that Jesus' teaching now required support for social agencies. The duty of Christian service, said Thompson, was to encourage these agencies in their work. Throughout his book, Thompson argued that individualistic piety did not, by itself, fulfill the teaching of the gospel. He also dealt with issues of Christianity and patriotism. Like Jesus, who loved his nation but whose love extended beyond its boundaries, so Christians

[515] Ellis Ray Branch, "Born of Conviction," 42-46, 181-93; Jack Winton Gunn, "Religion in the Twentieth Century," in *A History of Mississippi*, 2:484-85; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 53-58.

[516] Mark Newman, "The Mississippi Baptist Convention and Desegregation, 1945-1980," *Journal of Mississippi History* 59 (Spring 1997): 1-31; see Samuel S. Hill Jr., *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987); "Southern Baptists Survey Negro-White Cooperation," *Baptist Press* (October 18, 1968).

[517] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 47.

[518] D. M. Nelson, "Conflicting Views on Segregation" (Greenwood, Miss.: Educational Fund of the Citizens' Council, 1954).

should be loyal citizens while realizing that final loyalty belonged to a higher authority. Thompson also expressed a cautious pacifism stating that, "There are wars in which no Christian should participate."

An emphasis on internationalism and peace led Thompson to address the Christian attitude toward Communism. He held that the Christian duty to love one's enemies applied to communists. Christians, without self-righteousness, must overcome Communism by goodwill and the creation of Christian well-being for all peoples. Thompson justified the suppression of communism within the United States but spoke against hysterical anti-Communism. As Hobbie remarked, "Throughout the book Thompson presented a restrained progressivism that his loyal readers already knew. However, Thompson's views shocked those who had little previous contact with his writing or . . . [He] admitted the progressive purpose of the book. He wanted to make Christians better citizens. More prayer and Christian charity would not solve the world's problems. Solutions required action and an active commitment to Christian justice."[519]

Conservative Presbyterians reacted swiftly to *Jesus and Citizenship*. The Presbytery of Meridian overtured the General Assembly, speaking against educational literature it saw as written "to prepare the church to accept a proposed political form of integration of races, and other political changes as our Christian duty." *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* published alternate lessons for each chapter of the Thompson book. The Synod of Mississippi endorsed the *Journal* articles for use among its women's circles. Morton Smith prepared the alternate lesson published by *The Journal* for Thompson's chapter on race relations. He affirmed the essential unity of humankind, also stressing its diversity, citing the Acts 17:26 passage, along with the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11, from which he urged that "the principle of separation of people or of segregation is not necessarily wrong *per se*."

Smith said, "In fact, [segregation] seems clearly to be God's order of things. He urged that Genesis 6, Ezra 9-10, Malachi 2:10-16, and 2 Corinthians 6:14 argued against "intermarriage with other peoples." He answered integrationists' use of Galatians 3:28, stating that, "It can hardly be maintained that [Paul] meant to imply that there were no real and continued distinctions within the group he lists." He concluded that the Bible gave good grounds for segregation, especially to avoid intermarriage among the races.[520]

Several years later, Smith penned an article for *The Presbyterian Guardian*, a magazine of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The article appeared in the autumn of 1964, in the wake of Congressional action to pass the national Civil Rights Act and the PCUS Assembly's passage of an amendment to *The Book of Church Order* forbidding racial discrimination in the seating of worshipers, alongside efforts by some white Mississippi congregations to bar African American worshipers, and as Smith was concluding a term as guest lecturer at Westminster Seminary to join the faculty of the newly-formed Reformed Theological Institute in Mississippi. He wrote to explain statements by segregationist Southern Christians and their ongoing resistance to racial change to the predominately Northern audience which read *The Guardian*.

Smith was well-known to readers of *The Presbyterian Guardian*. He had studied at Westminster Seminary, the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania institution organized by Gresham Machen and others who withdrew from Princeton Seminary in 1929. He later obtained a degree at Columbia Seminary, going on for doctoral study at the Free University of Amsterdam. Smith's interests focused on 19th and early 20th century Southern Presbyterian treatments of the doctrines of scriptural inspiration and divine election. He did not examine the racial views and teachings on slavery of revered Southern theologians and preachers such as James Henley Thornwell, Robert Lewis Dabney, and Benjamin Morgan Palmer. His work therefore avoided a connection that formed an explicit focus of works by other historians, such as E. Brooks Holifield's *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Society, 1795-1860* (1978) and James O. Farmer Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (1986). These scholars argued that the Southern Presbyterian theologians made explicit connections between their theologies of predestination and election and their defense of slaveholding. But Smith's commendation of the older theologians' views on other subjects while ignoring their defenses of slavery

[519] The author is grateful to Professor Peter Hobbie for these citations from his Ph.D. dissertation, "Ernest Trice Thompson: Prophet for a Changing South" (Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.: 1987).

[520] Morton H. Smith, "Bible Study for Circle Bible Leadership on 'Jesus and Citizenship:' Lesson 8—Brotherhood and Race," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (July 3, 1957): 17-21.

contributed to a resurgence of interest among Presbyterian conservatives in the older theologians, and many of their works were republished. His failure to discuss their proslavery arguments perhaps helped excuse an avoidance of discussion among many fellow conservatives as to the degree to which the pro-slavery and segregationist arguments of the older PCUS theologians were related to their wider social theories.[521]

In his article for *The Guardian*, Smith wrote humbly, speaking as "a seeking Christian." He admitted that "It should be said that the specific question of race relations as we have it today is not dealt with in so many words in the Bible." But he did see certain principles that could be applied to the present problem. Smith presupposed the unity of humanity as set forth in the first chapters of Genesis—both in the creation accounts of Eden as well as in the descent of humanity from Noah's family following the flood—as well as in Paul's speech before the Aeropagus (some extreme segregationists had denied the very humanity of Blacks). Smith, however, disagreed with "the integrationist, who teaches that we are all brothers, and thus should ignore all external differences and mix as one race." For Smith, spiritual brotherhood and social equality were entirely separate questions.

Smith, as others before him, said, that "It is rather striking to see that the very verse used by the integrationist as supporting his position also speaks of the diversity of peoples. The verse reads, "And He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). "Notice," said Smith, "that the verse not only teaches the basic unity of the human race, but it also speaks of the diversity of mankind in different nations and groups, whose bounds have been set by God. Granting that this may be speaking primarily of the national distinctions as being under God's sovereign control, one who believes in God's sovereignty over the history of the world must also grant that racial distinctions have arisen under his plan and control." But Smith argued that the biblical concept of brotherhood "is not primarily that of the physical unity, but rather that of the spiritual unity that Christians . . . know and experience." He said, "It should be noted, in passing, that the biblical teaching on brotherhood is not primarily that of physical unity, but rather is reserved for the spiritual unity that Christians . . . have with one another."

Smith also referred to the Tower of Babel as indicating the origin of languages, cautiously stating that the story, "may not be the origin of the races, but it certainly is the Divine separation of people into different groups." Smith believed that the story of Noah's sons in Genesis 9-10 "may well be" where the origin or races was to be found. From this he concluded, in what Chappell calls "the typical anticlimax of literate segregationists:" "It is certain that in the combined accounts of . . . Noah, and . . . the Tower of Babel we find God's direct action of separation of different elements of the human race into different groups . . . [Therefore] it would seem that the principle of separation of peoples or of segregation is not necessary wrong *per se*."

Unlike Gillespie, Smith did not make reference to the curse of Canaan, simply referring to Noah's progeny as likely ancestors of the various racial groups. He wrote that, "Though it is not absolutely demonstrable that the modern races stem directly from these three sons of Noah, it seems likely that the primitive origin of the races is to be seen here." Smith saw in the divine intervention at Babel an act to break up the unity of people: "It prevented the development of sin by the unified race in the proportions of the pre-flood situation." He concluded that, "If from this we may conclude that ethnic pluriformity is the revealed will of God for the human race in its present situation, it is highly questionable whether the Christian can have part in any program that would seek to erase all ethnic distinctions."

Smith noted that some persons might cross over such distinctions, "but it is at least questionable whether a program designed to wipe out such differences on a mass scale should be endorsed by the Christian." Noting that the average Christian segregationist fears that the real goal of the integrationist is the intermarriage of the races, "Many who would be willing to integrate at lesser levels refuse to do so, simply because they feel that such will inevitably lead to the intermarriage of the races, which they consider to be morally wrong."

Smith called attention to the principle "of separation or segregation of a people from the world used by God to create and preserve a peculiar people unto himself," writing that the call of Abraham and the setting apart

[521] Morton H. Smith, "The Racial Problem Facing America," *Presbyterian Guardian* 33 (October 1964): 125-27; see Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishers, 1962).

of the Israelite slaves in a separate living situation in Egypt "was accomplished by means of a racial or ethnic segregation." He remarked that, "Of course, this is not the situation that faces us today, but it may be said that the principle of segregation as such is not necessarily sinful in and of itself."

The command following the exodus that the Israelites were not to intermarry with other peoples is described as a continuation of "the policy of segregation" under Moses. "This was to preserve their racial integrity, and especially their religious integrity." He noted that "Paul teaches that Christians ought not to be 'unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6:15), and wrote that, "Though this passage may include more than the marriage relation, it certainly applies to this relation." Summing up his Old Testament argument, Smith said, "The Israelites sinned and mixed with the pagans around them, and the result was the corruption of their faith and life. After the Exile, Ezra speaks again about maintaining their ethnic purity by not intermarrying with non-Israelites."

Seeking to answer the question whether or not the New Testament set aside this principle of separation, if with the coming of Christ, "we have the close of the period of particularity, in which God openly revealed himself to only one nation," Smith wrote that "the death of Judaism came with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross." He said that the sign of Pentecost spoke of the universal offer of the gospel to all peoples, and it also points to the basic spiritual unity of all who accept the gospel." Still, Smith did not believe that in passages such as Ephesians 2:11-22, Galatians 3:28, or Colossians 3:11, Paul meant to imply that there were no longer any distinctions or differences within the Church. "Even in spiritual matters within the church the Apostle makes a distinction between men and women. Women are to keep silent in the church. Throughout his epistles Paul makes distinctions and gives different exhortations to different groups within the church. . . . There is to be found in Paul's writings a recognition of the continued differences between Jewish and Gentile Christians. . . . Paul himself practiced certain Jewish observances at times. . . ." It was a kind of unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

Both Gillespie and Smith seemed to discount the arguments cited by the Supreme Court that segregation was harmful in and of itself. The court had applied these conclusions to the educational situation. Smith focused his defense of segregation upon the Church. He felt that it would have been far better

> Had separate churches never been established for the white and Negro races following the War Between the States. . . . Now we are faced with pressure from Northern whites and blacks to abolish a custom and pattern that has become fixed over the past century. . . . As a matter of practical consideration in a culture that has been sharply segregated for so long, it seems the point of wisdom to keep a segregated pattern in the sanctuary when there is joint worship. The fact that most Southern white congregations would be willing to have Negroes attend, if they were coming for true worship, and would be willing to sit together. This has been the traditional pattern in the South, and it could be continued if it were not for pressure groups seeking to integrate churches.

Smith acknowledged that Christians throughout the rest of the nation and around the world "are shocked to hear that Negroes are turned away from white churches in the South," but stated that the ground for this rejection was "the coming of the Negro to the church . . . not to worship, but rather to integrate and prove a point." Moving confidently to disclose the spiritual intent of the various African American persons and their companions who had sought to attend worship in white-controlled churches, Smith ventured, "That this is the case is shown by the fact that when offered segregated seating in the church, the Negroes refuse it. They insist that they should be allowed to enter and sit where they please." Smith felt this behavior went against the teaching of Jesus who taught "that one should take the lowest seat at a feast, and then if invited up to a higher, how much better. . . . (Luke 14:8-10). He did not take up the idea in Jesus' teaching that those of inferior status were nonetheless invited and included at the feast.

Smith rejected Jefferson's ideas of equality as set forth in the Declaration of Independence: "We might add that the principles of Thomas Jefferson as set forth in the Declaration of Independence were far from Christian. From the Christian viewpoint, one can seriously question the legitimacy of the American Revolution." For this assertion, though he did not do so, Smith could have adduced some 18th century Presbyterian support. Instead,

he turned to criticism of what he saw as more dangerous and contemporary advocates of egalitarianism. He saw a commonality of integrationist arguments with Marxist philosophy, "namely, the leveling of all to a common uniformity." Using an argument by insinuation, he asserted that, "Even if the American Negro movement has not been started or backed by the Communist Party . . . it certainly plays into the hands of the Communists, especially when civil disobedience can be encouraged, and the law and order of a city, state, or nation threatened." Smith justified segregation on the basis of civil stability. "Enough of this disorder, and the Communists or some tyrants may be able to step into the situation and seize control of our nation."

Smith concluded that, "If diversity is God's revealed way for mankind, one wonders about any program that advocates the intermarriage of diverse races in a way that will eradicate the differences that God has established." Still, he admitted that he could not find any clear teaching of scripture that would condemn individual intermarriage as such, except between the Christian and the non-Christian. In this, he separated himself from such conservative preachers as Bob Jones, whose South Carolina university was known for its prohibitions of interracial dating and marriage as well as from contemporary efforts in various Southern legislatures—including Mississippi's—to outlaw interracial marriage. Smith also believed that "integration of the races that does not necessarily lead to mass intermarriage is not necessarily unscriptural.

Like some other segregationists of the era, Smith believed that segregation could be justified as long as equality in facilities and services was provided. He seemed to apply the arguments that South Carolina governor James Byrnes and Mississippi governor Hugh L. White had put forward in the civil sphere to the Church, proposing that the real task of the Christian in the South was to strive for just and equal treatment for all. "Believing as I do that the matter of a segregated or integrated culture is a matter of the liberty of the people of any particular area. . . . This does not necessarily mean the overthrow of the cultural pattern, but it does call for the distinct effort to treat all men fairly and justly." Smith had no answer, however, for the failure of the Mississippi legislature to fund White's call for better schools to equalize the state's segregated educational provision for its African American children.

Smith directed his arguments to the Church. He sought to address criticisms that were not new, having been advanced many years before by the conservative Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield. He also addressed the matter briefly in his book, "*How Is the Gold Become Dim?*" *The Decline of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., as Reflected in Its Assembly Actions* (1973), published as conservatives in the South sought information as they prepared to withdraw from the PCUS. There, Smith wrote that, "The Bible says nothing about observing Christmas, but it does talk about segregation; thus, said Smith, the PCUS was wrong in adding the first to its official calendar, but he felt that "it is debatable whether it should abolish the latter."[522]

Robert Patrick Rayner observed that as Southern Presbyterians engaged in America's racial debate, there was a gradual evolution in the arguments made on behalf of segregation. Whereas earlier apologists such as J. E. Flow had been confident that segregation had been "decreed by God," by the 1950s, most were content to urge its maintenance "to preserve the peace." Smith, however, wrote as late as 1973 wrote that, "God himself segregated Israel from the Canaanites." In so writing, Smith echoed a statement by Mississippi governor Ross Barnett, who also invoked religion to support the segregationist cause. On September 12, 1963, Barnett had declared that, "The good Lord was the original segregationist. . . . He put the black man Africa. . . . . He made us white because he wanted us white, and He intended that we should stay that way." In an essay published in 2005, Smith cited support for segregation as a factor in the formation of the Presbyterian Church of America.[523]

Gillespie and Smith both cited as a predominant fear among Southern segregationists that even the slightest provision for mixing the races, as in the services of churches or the deliberations of church courts, or most especially in public schools, could eventually lead to "amalgamation of the races." By contrast, civil rights

[522] Smith, *How is the Gold Become Dim*?, 98-99.

[523] Rayner, 18; *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (September 12, 1963); See J. E. Flow, "Is Segregation UnChristian?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 10 (August 29, 1951); Smith, *How is the Gold Become Dim?*, 153; Morton H. Smith, "The Racial Problem Facing America," 127; Morton H. Smith, "The Southern Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America," *Interpreting and Teaching the Word of Hope: Essays in Honor of Jack Brown Scott on his Seventy-Seventh Birthday*, ed. by Robert L. Penny (Taylors, S.C.: Presbyterian Press, 2005): 206-12.

activists, while not standing against intermarriage, never publicly espoused interracial sex or marriage as a goal of the movement.[524] Smith agreed that the Bible "seems to teach" God-ordained racial distinctions but was not convinced that integration would lead to "mass intermarriage" or mass amalgamation." His primary argument for continuation of segregation was that regardless of political or social institutions, the requirement for Christians remained the same. Thus, a Christian would treat people the same in either a segregated or an integrated society. Smith did not see a religious justification for civil rights activism. Meanwhile, white PCUS segregationists, by their own admission, did little to ameliorate obvious inequities they saw around them. Indeed, they were usually silent or almost so in the face of lynchings, fire bombings, and racial violence that scarred Mississippi in the era during which this debate took place.[525]

Biblical stories not addressed by segregationists concerned the events of Pentecost where the Holy Spirit of Christ was gifted to people of many races, who then shared the fellowship of the Church in Jerusalem, or the presence of Jews and Greeks in early Christian congregations throughout the Roman Empire, or the existence of mixed marriages in the New Testament, such as the parents of Timothy, or Paul's rebuke of Peter when he withdrew from table fellowship with Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:9-21), as well as the actions of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15. Each of these examples contained both religious as well as social implications.

Few White Religious Leaders Actively Defended Segregation

As David L. Chappell has written, "The historically significant failure, from a segregationist point of view, was the failure of the predominantly white religious bodies in the South, 'to elevate their whiteness . . . above their other concerns.' The predominantly white churches usually placed evangelism of a spiritual sort, and the nurture of personal piety—a piety that only obliquely addressed racial arrangements and relations—on a higher plane than efforts to oppose desegregation or other aspects of the civil rights movement. As such, says Chappell, they did not do the things segregationists needed to defend prevailing customs and institutions sufficiently. Conservative religious segregationists made common cause with integration's arch opponents, such as the White Citizens' Councils, only in a defensive way and when directly pressed. Chappell wrote that with a few exceptions, such as the adamant refusal to seat African American worshipers under the glare of publicity, "White churches were unwilling to make sacrifices to preserve segregation. They loved other things—peace, social order—more. They did not make defense of segregation the unifying principle of their culture."[526]

Perhaps the best-known Southern minister to speak in defense of segregation was the Rev. W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas—the largest congregation of any communion in the South. Criswell chose not a pulpit, but the platform of a legislature to expound his segregationist beliefs. His speech before the South Carolina legislature, February 21, 1956, employed no biblical references to support racial separations. By 1968, when president of the Southern Baptist Convention, he repudiated segregation, saying it had never been justified on the basis of the Bible. Doubtless many Mississippi Presbyterians held similar beliefs—based more on culture and tradition than clearly-discerned theological principles.[527]

Other than Gillespie and Smith, few Southern defenders of segregation argued their case from the Bible. Read with care, it is clear that Gillespie in particular was qualifying his statements. But as Chappell has written, "The printed evidence reveals two things: segregationist organizers and leaders felt a strong need to add religious authority to their cause," else they would not have published Gillespie's address to the Synod of Mississippi, tentative and temporizing though it may have been, nor would they have solicited editorials such as one Forest, Mississippi Presbyterian pastor, the Rev. A. H. Freundt Jr. prepared for the Citizens' Council newsletter in the wake of the

[524] See Jane Dailey, "The Theology of Massive Resistance: Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after Brown," in Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 155.
[525] Smith, "The Racial Problem Facing America," 128.
[526] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 107, 109.
[527] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 139.

Meredith riots at the University of Mississippi. In the main, Chappell said, "They could not find anything more decisive [on religious grounds] than what these writers offered."

L. Nelson Bell offered in 1956 that, "The noise made by the White Citizens' Councils is out of proportion to the spirit of the South as a whole."[528]As Chappell observed, "One reason may be that the Bible, which had slavery in it, offered little objective support for post-emancipation racism. There was no scriptural equivalent for legal segregation or disenfranchisement. There were separate nations and tribes in the Bible, but these were not defined by race was the case in the modern South, or by civil or religious laws based on biological concepts." The nations and tribes of the Bible were defined by linguistic, cultural, and religious divisions. But the two "races" in the American South spoke the same language, shared many cultural practices, and almost all adhered to some branch of evangelical Protestant Christianity.

Both preservers and reformers invoked Acts 17:26, that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation," drawing different points from the first and second clauses. Gillespie conceded the main point, stating that not only in Acts but elsewhere in the Bible, "Paul affirms the unity of the race"—meaning the human race—"based upon a common origin, concerning which there can be no difference of opinion among those who accept the authority of the Bible." Gillespie and others who advocated racial separation on religious grounds differed from so-called scientific advocates of segregation who argued that humanity had not arisen from a single family. In this, men like Gillespie and Smith claimed, in effect, that their conservative Christian exegesis led to a moderating position.

In citing the story of Noah's curse on his son Ham after the Flood (Genesis 9:18-29), Gillespie, unlike earlier theologians, those who had used it to defend slavery placed many qualifications on the argument as it applied to 20th century concepts of segregation. Gillespie said the story of Ham showed that Providence must have been "responsible for the distinct racial characteristics, which seem to have become fixed in prehistoric times, and which are chiefly responsible for the segregation or racial groups across the centuries and in our time." Chappell felt that "Gillespie was on slightly firmer ground in drawing analogies to Old Testament restrictions on intermarriage and cross-breeding of crops." But what segregationists needed from their theologians was solid biblical justification for preserving the prevailing human-imposed laws and customs, and this Gillespie did not provide. "His qualifications show that he was on the defensive and not entirely confident even there: the permissibility of modern race laws was 'a possible though not necessary inference' from the ancient Hebrew restrictions.'"[529]

Morton Smith also conceded that, "We would have to say first of all that the Bible does not condemn segregation. On the other hand, it does not necessarily condemn integration. This being the case this whole matter falls into the realm of Christian liberty. Where the Bible is not clear cut . . . the individual must decide . . . on the basis of his own conscience." With regard to biblical commands that the Hebrews not intermarry with their neighbors, Smith added that, "It should be noted that this segregation of Abraham's seed was done by God ultimately for the purpose of preserving their religious purity, yet it was done by means of racial segregation." He then admitted that, "This is not the situation that faces us today, but at least the principle of segregation is seen as something that is not inherently evil."

Like Gillespie, Smith derived, "a general principle . . . indirectly from scripture," that "intermarriage" and "amalgamation" would conflict with God's plan, writing that since God, "made the different races as different races it would seem to be at least questionable as to whether man should seek to amalgamate the races. Babel was an attempt to do so." Speaking to the segregation laws in force throughout the South, he said that these originated when African Americans "were looked upon as an inferior race, a point that cannot necessarily be upheld today." With regard to the *Brown* decision, he said that "the Christian is to be subject to the powers that be," though he went on to support assertions that the court had acted unconstitutionally.[530]

[528] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 114-15; quoted in *Life Magazine* (October 1959): 159; see Albert H. Freundt Jr., "Oxford Clergy Wrong in Calling for 'Repentance!'" *The Citizen* (October 1962): 2-3.

[529] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 112-13.

[530] Morton H. Smith, "Brotherhood and Race," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (July 3, 1957).

Chappell explained that "On the fringes of the segregation movement, a few clergymen made more out of the curse on Ham, attempting to claim that God created and intended to maintain racial distinctions. But literate ministers either avoided biblical references or, in the manner of Gillespie, qualified them into uselessness."[531] Billy James Hargis, the crusading anti-communist evangelist from Tulsa, Oklahoma, borrowed almost all the biblical arguments about segregation from Gillespie. It is clear, that his views found kindred spirits in the White Citizens' Council and in the advocacy of certain Mississippi Presbyterian ministers quoted in this study. These men were exceptions, for as Numan V. Bartley has written, "On the whole, segregationists did not so much demand that the church actively endorse racial separation as they did that the church remain aloof from "current social, political, and economic problems" and concentrate on "its mission." Whatever one made of the segregation claims, it was clear, as Jane Dailey has written, "that both sides recognized sacred space as a crucial frontier in the desegregation battle."[532]

As with other conservative organizations, religious and secular, the White Citizens' Councils urged members to be wary of their leaders—especially pastors. The early 1950s saw continued efforts to link integrationist beliefs with communist sympathies. Citizens' Council publications depreciated the views of pastors with a 1956 editorial titled, "Pinkos in the Pulpit." Two years later, the council warned of "Reds in the Woodpile and in the Rectory" and later in same year, ran a front-page article, which proclaimed that, "Southern Churches Urge Mixing." C. C. Smith, of Dumas, Mississippi, in a Citizens' Council leaflet entitled, "On Which Side Are the Preachers?" blamed racial strife on "preachers who recommend racial 'integration (mongrelization).'" Smith said that it was not just Northern preachers, but also those "right here at home . . . in whom we had placed our trust," who enlisted in "the enemy's army." He averred that, "It was a waste of time to study the causes for this sudden change of attitude of the Preachers—most of them. . . . The 'gentle gentleman of the cloth' has turned out to be a vicious monstrosity, without parallel, and to stop him is the task at hand." Smith asked, "Is it necessary to declare war on the Preachers? Not at all. Simply enlist in the army against Communism and its many, often disguised, 'Fronts,' and you will automatically find the Big Seminary Preachers in the camp of the enemy." R. B. Crawford, a Presbyterian elder in Prince Edward County, Virginia, who had led an effort to close its public schools for five years rather than accept their integration, wrote early in that controversy that, "The worst obstacle we face in the fight to preserve segregated schools in the South is the white preacher."[533]

Billy Graham and L. Nelson Bell Worked to Moderate Segregationist Views

In some ways, it was easier for church leaders removed to some degree from congregational settings to speak out against segregation. Segregationists often spoke against the influence of professors who supported desegregation in the church colleges or seminaries. By the 1950s, most denominational seminaries in the South had adopted policies allowing black students to study in them. A major controversy in the Episcopal Church occurred in June 1952, when the trustees of the University of the South (Sewanee) rejected a directive from its supporting dioceses to admit Black students, and eight of the ten members of the divinity school's faculty protested, supporting integration, with the result that all but one of the protesting professors resigned. The school desegregated in 1953 despite threats by a major donor to discontinue funding.[534]

Among Mississippi Presbyterian conservatives, many charges were laid at the feet of far-distant seminary professors and presidents, General Assembly committees, church theologians, the Board of Christian Education, and editors. Missionaries might also have been criticized, but they generally occupied such revered status in the

[531] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 113.

[532] Numan V. Bartley*, The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 302, Billy James Hargis, "The Truth about Segregation" in George Wallace Papers. Alabama Department of Archives and History; Minor interview cited in Marsh, *God's Long* Summer, 232; Dailey, 180. As late as 2022, Gillespie and Smith's papers could be seen on white nationalist websites.

[533] *Presbyterian Outlook* 137 (June 13, 1955).

[534] Gardiner H. Shattuck Jr., *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000): 44-50.

Church's esteem that they were exempt from censorship. These attitudes and charges, along with earlier controversies over evolution and the introduction of biblical criticism brought a certain uneasiness about persons who had their origin or education "out of state," so that they were more and more seen as outsiders with no right to address local situations in Mississippi.[535]

North Carolina's David Chappell has written that, "Segregation's biblical sanction was a matter of deep concern that should not be underestimated. The South was the Bible Belt: inerrantist and literalist commitments to biblical interpretation ran high. The question of the biblical provenance of their taboos and traditions was, for many white southerners, a subject of great soul searching." The Bible's teaching on such subjects was "not simply propaganda." Just as Old School Presbyterians opposed radical 19th century abolitionists, maintaining that they had gone beyond what the Bible taught, so also the lack of clear biblical support for 20th century segregationist views would have required honest segregationists to drop pretensions of conservative views on biblical authority. As Chappell reasoned, "They would have to become radically unbiblical in their derivation of moral support for, let alone commands to maintain, their political institution."[536]

Southern Presbyterian Journal editor L. Nelson Bell refrained from bringing forth biblical arguments but advocated voluntary adherence to segregation, stating in a *Life Magazine* forum in October 1956 that, though he supported segregation as a social tradition, believing that Black as well as white people preferred to be separate, "Christians should recognize that there is no biblical or legal justification for segregation." He said, "It can be safely affirmed that segregation of the races by law is both unchristian and un-American." He went on to say that "It can be demonstrated with equal force that forced integration of the races is sociologically impracticable and at the same time such forced alignments violate the right of personal choice." Bell thought Jim Crow laws should be simply allowed to die.[537]

Chappell wrote that Bell's moderating position entailed controversy among several correspondents. One was the Rev. W. A. Gamble, pastor at Hollandale and Stated Clerk of Central Mississippi Presbytery. Gamble wrote Bell that, "To think that segregation could or would be maintained without segregation laws, is to be quite unrealistic." Gamble told Bell that, "It cannot be forgotten that the removal of segregation laws, and the consequent mingling of the races more and more, will inevitably result in miscegenation. . . ." He said also that, "The person who opposes segregation by law should seriously consider the part he may have in developing a mongrel population, a development I believe God disapproves." Whereas Bell advocated voluntary separation, Gamble wrote that, "The people of Mississippi know" that racial barriers, "can only be maintained by force." Bell wrote in the margin of one of Gamble's letters, "I did not answer his letter as he is much like Carl McIntire—nothing I might write would please him." Though a collection of Gamble's sermons from 1937 to 1971 is preserved, there is no evidence that he ever devoted a sermon to the subject to segregation or to any biblical arguments for it.[538]

Bell warned that extreme positions threatened the Church. He wrote that, "A split in our church is far more likely over the race issue than it was over church union." Bell believed in segregation, but Chappell concluded that Bell "did not want to stake his journal, his evangelism, or his conservatism on segregation's defense." Bell's views were undoubtedly related to actions taken by his son-in-law, famed evangelist, the Rev. Billy Graham. Graham had denounced segregation during his 1952 Jackson crusade, then backtracked under pressure, saying he did not wish to become involved in "local issues." Jemar Tisby offers this explanation for Graham's actions: he was "quite vocal in his denunciations of communism, something that many conservatives also associated with the civil rights movement, and this association effectively dissuaded him and others from supporting the activists who protested racism."[539]

After 1954 Graham had taken a firmer position. His views likely influenced Mississippians' thinking where others did not. He would not allow segregated seating in his crusades. Graham had, like Bell, stated that segregation

[535] Cited in Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 128-30, 266, 141.

[536] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 113, 115.

[537] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 139-40.

[538] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 117-18, 124, 140.

[539] Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 135.

could not be justified on biblical grounds, and he received much criticism from segregationists. Graham stated further that sports and business were head of the Church in "getting together racially," and that "church people should be the first to step forward and practice what Christ taught—that there is no difference in the sight of God." Still, many segregationists were unhappy that Graham invited the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to offer a prayer at one of his New York City crusades in 1957. Graham praised King for "the social revolution he was leading"—praise that caused Southern conservatives suspicious of King's alleged Communist ties—to raise their eyebrows.[540]

Though Bell advocated a moderating position, *The Southern Presbyterian Journal's* board of directors moved toward a more segregationist stance. In the summer of 1957, the board adopted a statement condemning those who promoted "enforced integration." It decried the actions of "outsiders" who sought to solve the problems of the American South and stated that "racial integrity as it has developed in the Providence of God" should be preserved. *The Journal* board affirmed that, "Voluntary segregation in churches, schools, and other social relationships is for the highest interests of the races and is not un-Christian." The board asserted that interracial social relationships, "rather than being the ideal to which the church should work, are actually compounding the problems they seek to solve."[541]

In 1960, Bell expressed the opinion in an editorial entitled "One Southerner Speaks," that though he disapproved of interracial marriage, "We believe that we who live in the South must come to term with changes which, while having taken place gradually, are now actualities." But in that same year, *Journal* editor Aiken Taylor urged the PCUS to vote down overtures to the General Assembly seeking to reopen reunion negotiations with the UPUSA. Among his reasons were pronouncements by the Northern church on racial issues. Taylor said, "Some of the pronouncements, such as those on race relations, have been sufficiently explosive to produce a wide-open split in a Church such as ours."[542]

Even this was not enough for W. A. Gamble. The Rev. John R. Richardson, a native of Centreville, Mississippi and then pastor of Atlanta's Westminster Presbyterian Church, wrote Gamble to reassure him that *The Journal* would maintain its segregationist position. *The Journal* board subsequently issued a statement that insisted that "the integrity of each race should be a matter of paramount importance and grave concern that much today which purports to be "Christian race relations" has nothing to do with biblical Christianity but works toward destroying of racial integrity as it has developed in the Providence of God." The board reaffirmed "voluntary segregation in churches, schools, and other social relationships," all for the "highest interests on the races." *The Journal* board believed that "forced interracial social relationships, rather than being the ideal to which the church should work, are actually compounding the problems they seek to solve."[543]

Then, evangelist Billy Graham (son-in-law of Nelson Bell and whose wife was a member of the Montreat Presbyterian Church) weighed in. In 1956 when W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, made his much-quoted speech supporting segregation before the South Carolina legislature, Graham, a member of Criswell's congregation, told the Associated Press in Tokyo, where he was conducting a revival, "My pastor and I have never seen eye to eye on the race question." After this, Criswell never publicly defended segregation again.[544]

There were other grounds on which Presbyterians criticized Billy Graham. Sean Michael Lucas has written that Graham's policy of including liberal Protestants in the planning committees for his meetings caused difficulty for some conservative leaders. L. Nelson Bell criticized Graham for inviting the Rev. John Sutherland Bonnell,

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[540] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 138-40, 273. See Billy Graham, "No Color Line in Heaven," *Ebony Magazine* (April 1960); William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: Morrow, 1991): 168-72.

[541] "Statement of Policy on Race Relations," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (August 28, 1957): 3.

[542] L. Nelson Bell, "One Southerner Speaks," *Presbyterian Journal* 19 (April 13, 1960): 9; G. Aiken Taylor, "Church Union an Issue," *Presbyterian Journal* 18 (April 20, 1960): 11.

[543] Richardson's letter to Gamble cited in Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 193; "Journal Day Attracts Throng of Supporters," *Presbyterian Journal* 19 (August 31, 1960): 5.

[544] Howard Dorgan, "Response of the Main-Line Southern White Protestant Pulpit to *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954-1965," in Calvin M. Logue and Howard Dorgan, eds., *A New Diversity in Contemporary Southern Rhetoric* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987): 32; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 139.

pastor of New York City's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, to a leadership role in his New York campaign. Others found fault with Graham's practice of sending those who made spiritual decisions to the church of their choice—churches that some suspected might not be "Bible-believing"—that is, conservative, or Reformed. For this reason, and because of his non-segregation policy, Lucas wrote that after 1952, *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* mentioned Graham's work less often.[545]

Supreme Court Order Stirred More Segregationist Discontent

The Eisenhower administration, which declined to endorse the 1954 *Brown* decision, urged the Supreme Court to stay away from any fixed timetable for desegregation. On May 31, 1955, a year and two weeks after the *Brown* decision was announced, Chief Justice Warren reaffirmed the court's earlier ruling, and while not setting a timetable, concluded that it should be accomplished, "with all deliberate speed."[546] But the overall message to the South seemed to be that it could take as long as it wanted to desegregate schools. To many, this meant never. Although President Eisenhower later wrote in his memoirs that *Brown*, "was unquestionably the right decision," during the time of his presidency, he did not support the decision strongly in public. In private, he admitted catastrophic results if racial mores were so quickly placed under threat. "White southerners increasingly sought to demonstrate the fears articulated by their leaders. Reluctance to implement the *Brown* decision quickly began to crystallize into direct opposition to it."[547]

The second court ruling inspired even more reaction in Mississippi. Senator Eastland charged that the court "has been influenced and infiltrated by Reds." Jackson attorney Ross R. Barnett, running for governor in 1955 declared, "There is no room for compromise on this issue, and I shall never compromise. When agitators come into our midst to sow seeds of discord in an effort to destroy our great traditions and way of life, we will stand as firm as the old, famed Rock of Gibraltar. We will convince the world that we are capable and determined to govern our own internal affairs."[548]

As the ranking member of the U. S. Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee, counterpart to the better-known House Un-American Activities Committee, James O. Eastland devoted himself to the anti-Communist crusade. As the *Brown* case was before the Supreme Court, Eastland tried to demonstrate connections between the Communist Party and advocates of school desegregation.[549]

Eastland said in a speech at Senatobia, in August 1955, "On May 17, 1954, the Constitution of the United States was destroyed because the Supreme Court disregarded the law and decided integration was right. *You are not required to obey any court which passes out such a ruling.* In fact, you are obligated to defy it." In December, addressing a statewide convention of White Citizens' Councils, he said, "The anti-segregation decisions were dishonest decisions. They were dictated by political pressure groups bent upon the destruction of the American system of government, and the mongrelization of the white race." Eastland proposed a Southern Regional Commission, financed with tax money, to fight those "political pressure groups," which run, he said, "from the blood red of the Communist Party to the almost equally red blood of the National Council of Churches in the United States." Eastland called for the state to consider their "legal right of interposition, to void and hold for naught the

[545] Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 176-77.

[546] Brian J. Daugherty and Charles C. Bolton, *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008).

[547] John A. Kirk, "Massive Resistance and Minimum Compliance: The Origins of the 1957 Little Rock School Crisis and the Failure of School Desegregation in the South," in Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 81.

[548] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years,* 30-31.

[549] See Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004): 45-47.

deliberate, dangerous, and palpable infractions of the Constitution committed by the Supreme Court," asking, "Do not the states have the right to defend that sovereignty?"[550]

In May 1955, shortly before the Supreme Court issued its second desegregation decree, the Rev. George W. Lee was killed by a shotgun blast in Belzoni after registering to vote and urging his congregation and other African American citizens to do the same. In August of the same year, Lamar Smith, a World War II veteran who had also encouraged fellow African Americans to register, was shot in broad daylight on the lawn of the Lincoln County Courthouse in Brookhaven. No arrests were made in the Lee case, though the sheriff had seen a white man leaving the scene "with blood all over him." Smith's accused slayer also went free as no witnesses would come forward.[551]

Two weeks after Lamar Smith was killed, yet another murder occurred in Mississippi, this one so brutal as to garner attention across the civilized world. As the Rev. Richard T. Harbison recalled, "I remember the day in August 1955, shortly after returning to Greenville from my year of study abroad, going down to the offices of *The Delta Democrat-Times* for an interview about my experiences abroad. When I walked up to the desk of one of the editors, he was absorbed in a tickertape which was just being printed. Reading it, he tore it off, handed it to me and said: 'I was afraid of this.' The news had just been released that the body of a Black youth, had been found submerged in the waters of the Tallahatchie River on the edge of the Delta."[552]

On August 28, 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old youth visiting relatives in the small community of Money, was kidnapped and murdered, allegedly for whistling at a white woman at a country store. He was shot, his body dumped in the Tallahatchie River, with a 75-pound gin fan tied with barbed wire around his neck. Even though Till's grandfather Mose Wright testified against the murderers—the first time in a law court in the state that an African American had pointed a finger of accusation at a white man—the alleged killers were quickly acquitted in the trial in nearby Sumner. Two months after Till's murderers were set free, Rosa Parks, a Montgomery, Alabama seamstress, refused to yield her seat to a white man on the bus, sparking a year-long boycott led by a young local pastor, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

African Americans in Mississippi had a perilous existence, their survival and prosperity conditioned upon subservience to whites. But after Emmett Till's murder, American outrage was kindled. Clarksdale civil rights activist Aaron Henry noted that Till's slaying "came simultaneously with the advent of nationwide television, and the story was well covered." The two were tried at the Tallahatchie County courthouse in Sumner and were acquitted when an all-white jury took only minutes to decide the case. They confessed in an interview with William Bradford Huie in the January 1956 issue of *Look Magazine*.[553]

The Rev. Robert Price Richardson Jr. recalled reactions to the Till murder in the Hazlehurst Presbyterian Church:

> One of the darkest days in the state of Mississippi came in the summer and fall of 1955 during my second year in Hazlehurst. It was the ruthless, cold-blooded killing by white men of a young black man named Emmett Till from Chicago. . . . This particular murder had a way of mobilizing the civil rights movement in our state. I never flinched from dealing with that cold-blooded murder forthrightly in a sermon from the Hazlehurst Church on the Sunday following that killing. Nobody walked out of the church, no one stood up in protest. They listened to the gospel being preached that day, because they supported and protected my right to speak from a free pulpit. They may have resented the words, but they could not and would not tackle my right to preach the Word that spoke about life and death and murder and responsibility for neighbor. There may have been other stories and illustrations that marked my preaching

[550] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years,* 44-46.

[551] James C. Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II*, 39.

[552] Timothy B. Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); Harbison, "Why So Fertile a Land," 23.

[553] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years,* 34, 36; Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

and teaching in Hazlehurst during those four years, but the one about Emmett Till is the one that stood out with me and for me, above all others.[554]

In late summer 1955, Elizabeth Spencer arrived in Carrollton after a literary trip to Italy. She came home at a difficult time. "Nearby, not many miles over in the Delta, and quite near my father's farm, a terrible thing had just occurred. A boy named Emmett Till had come from Chicago to visit relatives. He was Black. He had whistled at the attractive wife of a man who ran a small highway grocery. That evening her husband and her brother-in-law had taken him out for a whipping. They had finally let him go—or so they said. However, the mutilated body of a boy identified as Till was recovered some days later from the Sunflower River."

Spencer wrote that,

> For years, my father [Presbyterian elder Luther Spencer] had been a source of pride in my thinking. Though difficult and autocratic and many times lacking in any understanding of my feelings, he had at least been forward-looking about racial matters. He had deplored the strict segregationist bent of my uncle, who though vastly humane in his feelings, based all his theories of race on Southern tradition. To him history had established a set of values not to be betrayed.
>
> My father, however, subscribed to and read Hodding Carter's liberal paper, published in Greenville, *The Delta Democrat-Times*. . . . It was to this fair-thinking person that I thought I was speaking when I deplored the murder of Emmett Till. . . . My father reacted to the crime the way a stone wall might if hit by a BB gun. He refused to discuss it or to hear any discussion of it. He said that 'we had to keep things in hand.' The attitude of the business communities, now forming themselves more and more into the so-called Citizens' Councils was that the principal task of the white community was to 'maintain order.'[555]

White Mississippians initially expressed outrage over the Till murder, but as criticism mounted, many became defensive. Whites raised $10,000 to pay legal counsel for J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, Till's accused killers. As Congressman Frank E. Smith, whose district included Leflore County, said, recalling the event, "It was alarming that our people could commit such an act. What was even more tragic in the long view was the fact that Bryant and Milam won respectability with the majority of white citizens. This is what brought Mississippi in disrepute." Yet another outrage occurred in 1959—when Mack Charles Parker was lynched from a jail cell in Poplarville.[556]

The Rise of Massive Resistance

It was Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd who in 1956 coined the term "Massive Resistance" to rally opponents of desegregation. Segregationist forces traced their opposition back to the ill-fated Nullification Crisis of 1832, resurrecting the doctrine of "interposition," whereby states could invoke what some claimed was their sovereign right to prevent the implementation of federal acts that the legislatures' declared to be unconstitutional. (Nullification was understood an act of an individual state, while interposition was conceived as an action that would be undertaken by states acting jointly.) The Virginia Assembly enacted an interposition resolution in February 1956. It urged "sister states" to follow suit. Five more including Mississippi enacted interposition statutes. The Mississippi legislature went further, declaring the *Brown* decree to be "of no lawful effect within the confines of the State of Mississippi" and ordered all public employees to "prohibit the implementation or the compliance [*sic*] with the Integration Decision." The measure was signed into law by Governor J. P. Coleman. The legislature also voted to restrict NAACP activities in Mississippi.[557]

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[554] Richardson, *Wrapped in Love*, 93.

[555] Elizabeth Spencer, *Landscapes of the Heart: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1998): 287-89.

[556] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 36.

[557] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*,15, 20.

After the *Brown* ruling, some newspapers in the Middle States, such as *The Nashville Tennessean*, declared that Southerners "have learned to live with change. They can learn to live with this one." But in the Deep South, massive resistance took hold. Georgia's Governor, Herman Talmadge, declared his state would "resist mixing the races in the schools if it is the sole state of the nation to do so." Senator Eastland announced that, "The South will not abide by or obey this legislative decision by a political court." Moderates—advocating a gradualist approach—were squeezed on both sides. Eastland trekked through the South, speaking to mass segregation rallies, warning against efforts "to pick them off one by one under the damnable doctrine of gradualism." This position was paralleled in the churches. Politicians attempted to exploit voter anxiety over integration. The issue became politicized and so was declared off limits for church consideration.[558]

There was a deep sense of offense among segregationists at being told by "outsiders" what to do. It was as if some felt a deep ambiguity about their place in the American nation, or at least their willingness to obey that government if offended by its decrees. "Perhaps [some] were so embittered at the process of externally coerced racial change that they preferred, in the best southern [white] tradition, to fight futile battles rather than to capitulate." William Faulkner was quoted as saying, that Mississippi whites "will accept another civil war, knowing they're going to lose."[559] While he disliked what he saw as a puritanical stress on sober living and the discouragement of fleshly pleasures, Faulkner did admire one Calvinistic emphasis as it was translated into human behavior in the South—the need for action.[560]

PCUS Criticized for Promoting Integration

In the spring of 1955, Central Mississippi Presbytery expressed objections to deliverances on race relations from the Division of Christian Relations of the Board of Church Extension, requesting the General Assembly "to carefully define the function of the Division of Christian Relations . . . to the end that deliverances shall not be made by this agency which reflect upon the Christian fidelity of those within the Church who may differ from it in matters of conscience." The presbytery took note of statements from Assembly agencies that, to it, displayed "a growing tendency on the part of the Division of Christian Relations . . . to make deliverances which are out of agreement with the distinctive principles and the historic position of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and which violated the right of private judgment "in such matters" [as race relations] and which made deliverances "concerning them which amount to authoritative statements of policy." The presbytery reminded the Assembly of the *Westminster Confession's* statement that "Synods and Councils are to handle and conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical." At its stated meeting four months earlier, the presbytery had overtured the Assembly to dissolve the Council on Christian Relations.[561]

Two years later, the same body declared, that "We believe that since the General Assembly took its original actions on the race question in 1954, there has been a growing tendency to pressure the Church to accept the integration of the races, and as time has gone on . . . the efforts to have the churches accept integration have been carried to the extreme." The presbytery expressed concern over Sunday school materials published by the PCUS Board of Christian Education, complaining that, "These [materials] have become more and more objectionable," so that, "We believe that the Word of God is being shifted from the center toward the circumference and that our Presbyterian doctrines are not receiving the historic and proper emphasis." These resolves were followed at subsequent meetings by overtures calling for abolition of the Assembly's Council on Christian Relations and

[558] Michael J. Klarman, "Why Massive Resistance?" in Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 21, 28.

[559] Klarman, "Why Massive Resistance?" 33.

[560] Robert L. Johnson, "William Faulkner, Calvinism and the Presbyterians," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 57 (Spring 1979): 6-81; Mary Dell Fletcher, "William Faulkner and Residual Calvinism," *Southern Studies* 18 (1979): 199-216; John H. Leith, "Calvinism," *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, 1279-82; John Sykes, "Faulkner, Calvinism, and Religion," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75 (Spring 1997): 43-53.

[561] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 21, 1955): 62-63; (January 20, 1955).

repeal of previous Assembly actions endorsing desegregation. Jackson's First Church, the Central Mississippi Presbytery's largest congregation, acted in 1957, to cut off funding to the PCUS Board of Church Extension due to its support for the Council of Christian Relations.[562]

All segregationist ministers argued against what they called "social preaching." Morton Smith wrote in his *Guardian* article, "Jesus, our King, did not seek social reform, but salvation of sinners." Chappell asserted that, "Their falling back on blanket opposition to all social preaching was a tacit concession that they could not win on the merits. It was unconvincing in any case, in light of all they preached about the social evils of drinking alcohol, gambling, divorce, and communism."[563]

Segregationists clearly understood that their opponents in the Church were motivated by a belief that segregation was incompatible with scripture. They at least tried to keep the question open.[564] The session of Trinity Presbyterian Church at Montgomery, Alabama, petitioned the PCUS Board of Christian Education in June 1957, arguing that, "There are strong and sincere differences of opinion on the part of equally sincere and devout Christians." Recognizing "the right of some of our brethren to differ from us," they asked, "that we be accorded the same Christian courtesy in our views," pleading that, "We see no reason why this question of race relations should be continually injected into our literature and programs and presented in such a manner as to leave the impression that to believe and think otherwise is un-Christian." Such appeals, as Chappell noted, "raised the possibility that some segregationists sought to get the church out of politics as a way to hide how deeply the southern white churches were divided."[565]

What was more revealing about the 1950s and 1960s, Chappell wrote, "was how much the apolitical stance of many segregationist preachers divided them from other segregationist preachers. Segregationists needed more than *de facto* support: they needed help in rallying white Southerners."[566]

Emma Knowlton Lytle, of Perthshire, Mississippi, a well-known sculptor and painter, and a member of the Shelby Presbyterian Church, perhaps expressed views common to many quiet Presbyterians around the state, writing to family members that, "I shall continue to defend Mississippi's right to decide her own destiny. But I believe, and I'm afraid, her choice is now limited to this: Mississippi must give up segregation by 'law,' or force, or perish." Lytle believed that to "salvage all the best of our heritage," would take "courage and grace." She felt that "Integration by force is a brutal, beastly, horrible business, but segregation by force is also a brutal, beastly business. The white people of Mississippi are experiencing exactly what we have dished out: intimidation by force." She said that the Civil War had "unfortunately" decided that states could not "maintain a conviction against the majority of the nation at large."[567]

Censorship Efforts Disrupted Religious Weeks at Ole Miss and Mississippi State

In this era of religious enthusiasm, it had become customary to designate a Religious Emphasis Week in the state's public colleges, with speakers of note invited to address the students. In the autumn of 1955, the person responsible for inviting speakers to the University of Mississippi was campus chaplain, the Rev. Will D. Campbell, a native of Amite County and a Baptist minister with degrees from Wake Forest, Tulane, and Yale Divinity School. (He was later the cartoonist Doug Marlette's inspiration for the character "Will B. Dunn" in the comic strip, "Kudzu.") Campbell and his student committee were concerned that the issue of race that was then roiling

[562] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 10, 1957): 16-17; (January 16, 1958): 3-38; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 130-31.

[563] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 141.

[564] J. Russell Hawkins, *The Bible Told Them So: How Southern Evangelicals Fought to Preserve White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[565] Hawkins, *The Bible Told Them So*, 140.

[566] Cited in *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* 16 (June 19, 1957): 6-8; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 123.

[567] Cited in Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 258.

the society around them was not being discussed on the university campus. Professors felt constrained not to raise the subject in classes.

Campbell and the student committee invited an outspoken Episcopal priest, the Rev. Alvin Kershaw, of Ohio, who had become famous because of his appearance on the television quiz show *"The $64,000 Question*." After claiming his prize, Kershaw had declared that he would donate part of his winnings to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, known throughout the nation as an activist group for civil rights.[568]

In November, after Kershaw's comments became known in Mississippi, segregationists were determined to close the university to persons expressing such ideas, especially to any supporters of the NAACP. Several persons anonymously contacted Kershaw, threatening to harm him if he came to Ole Miss.[569] Chancellor John D. Williams received many letters urging him to cancel the invitation, which after some vacillation, he did. Professor Morton King, chairman of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, resigned in protest.

Williams proposed substituting local clergy for the absent Kershaw, but the ministers, including the Rev. Murphey C. Wilds of Oxford's First Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Athol D. Cloud, North Mississippi Presbytery's secretary for Church Extension, refused. Campbell conducted the week by announcing daily silent meditation in the university's large auditorium. Hundreds of students filled Fulton Chapel each day, witnessing for freedom of speech and their religious rights, sitting silently before two empty chairs on the stage, highlighted by spotlights, accentuating the absence of the invited speaker.[570]

Many students were offended that outside pressure had been brought to bear on their school. The *Daily Mississippian*, the student-run university newspaper opined that, "The Citizens' Councils have failed to grasp the meaning of a university." Vice-Chancellor W. Alton Bryant, an alumnus (he was married to the niece of longtime chancellor and Presbyterian elder Alfred Hume), represented the university at the Institutes of Higher Learning Board in Jackson, which met to consider the Kershaw matter. He argued that no legal basis existed for denying Kershaw's visit and explained that to withdraw the invitation would suggest a new policy of barring anyone who supported any organization, including many religious ones, which opposed segregation. With excitement surrounding the Emmett Till case still arousing feelings throughout the state, the board declined to act. Soon after the Kershaw controversy, Will Campbell accepted a position as a roving field agent with the National Council of Churches.

Other civil rights matters entered the picture. In November 1955, the Supreme Court ordered an end to segregation in public recreational facilities; and in early December, the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott began. Then, as historian Charles W. Eagles has commented, "Perhaps the most inflammatory incident occurred when William Faulkner spoke on race relations at a historical convention in Memphis. Faulkner raised the ire of Mississippi white supremacists when he said that, "To live anywhere in the world of A.D. 1955 and be against equality because of race or color, is like living in Alaska and being against snow."

Edwin White, a state legislator from Lexington, reacted to Faulkner's statement, asserting that, "Support for integration comes not from the masses of Negroes but from a "blatant group of white writers, politicians, educators and clergymen." The *Itawamba County Times* suggested that the university should instead invite one of the many "ministers who have a knowledge of God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and who know that segregation is of God." Suggestions came that the Rev. G. T. Gillespie, author of "The Christian View of Segregation," be invited in

[568] Campbell, *Brother to a Dragonfly*, 11-21.

[569] Ernest M. Limbo, "Religion and the Closed Society: Religious Emphasis Week, 1956, at the University of Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 64 (Spring 2002): 1-16.

[570] Charles W. Eagles, "The Closing of Mississippi Society: Will Campbell, 'The Sixty-Four Thousand Dollar Question' and Religious Emphasis Week at the University of Mississippi," *Journal of Southern History* 67 (May 2001): 331-72; David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999): 273-74; Johnston, *And One was a Priest*, 149.

Kershaw's place, or the Rev. John Reed Miller of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church or President D. M. Nelson of Mississippi College—all known segregationists.[571]

Two weeks following the disruption at Ole Miss, the Rev. Duncan M. Gray Jr., rector of Cleveland's Calvary Episcopal Church, was scheduled to speak at a similar observance at Mississippi State University, sponsored by Westminster Fellowship, the PCUS student organization. His announced topic was "The Social Implications of the Christian Gospel," as well as a seminar called "The Changing South." When in his first address Gray stated that segregation was not compatible with the Christian gospel, much controversy ensued. Mississippi State's president Benjamin Hilbun Sr. told Gray he had three options: He could say he had been misquoted, he could promise not to mention race or segregation again or any related topic for the rest of the seminar, or he could leave.

Gray declined these constraints and was not permitted to make any further address to the student body. Frederick Sullins editorialized in *The Jackson Daily News* that "only home-grown ministers" should be allowed to address the student body," though Gray was a Mississippi native, the son of an Episcopal bishop. Again, other speakers canceled their appearances in protest, but the college administration bowed to pressure from segregationists around the state.[572] News of the situation spread quickly, and when Gray returned home from Starkville, he was shunned by many of his parishioners as well as townspeople. Gray recalled that the Rev. R. A. Bolling, pastor of Cleveland's First Presbyterian Church, took a risk by giving Gray symbolic support: He was the only one who would sit beside him at meetings of the Rotary Club.[573]

Mississippi-Born Pastor Leads Effort for Peaceful School Integration in Little Rock

Probably the most far-reaching segregationist effort in 1956 was the issuance of a "Southern Manifesto," co-authored by Senator Eastland and signed by 96 other Southern congressmen, including Jamie L. Whitten, a deacon in Charleston's First Presbyterian Church. The manifesto, dated March 12, declared that the integration decrees of the Supreme Court were unconstitutional and that every legal means available would be used to reverse them. Eighteen U. S. Senators signed the manifesto; three did not—Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, Estes Kefauver and Albert Gore Sr., of Tennessee. According to the manifesto:

> This unwarranted exercise of power by the Court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the States principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.[574]

In July 1956, following upon four Southern legislatures' interposition resolutions and the publication of the Southern Manifesto, President Eisenhower declared that "There must be respect for the Constitution—which means the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution—or we shall have chaos." The Republican president had not won high regard from white Mississippians, and this implied threat no doubt added to the Southern segregationist feeling of isolation from the rest of the country.[575]As the 1956 Democratic National Convention neared, the nominee presumptive, Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois, came out for a platform that included

[571] Charles W. Eagles: *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 124-25, 134.

[572] Will D. Campbell, *"And Also With You:" Duncan Gray and the American Dilemma* (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House, 1997): 167-69; Johnston, *And One was a Priest*, 149-50; Sparks, *Religion in* Mississippi, 230.

[573] [Charlotte Capers, *et. al.*], *The Episcopal Church in Mississippi, 1763-1992* (Jackson: Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, 1992): 122-23, 130. See Joel L. Alvis Jr., "Racial Turmoil and Religious Reaction: The Rt. Rev. John M. Allin," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 50 (March 1981): 88-96; The Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray to R. Milton Winter, March 1, 1990; Campbell, *And Also With You,* 159.

[574] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Manifesto. Accessed 2.1.26.

[575] See Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, 436-48.

support of the Supreme Court decisions against segregation. Republican vice-presidential candidate Richard Nixon also commended the court's decision. Mississippi gave its electoral votes to Stevenson. These actions only heightened the segregationist South's sense of dislocation.

Across the Mississippi River, serious trouble was brewing—the nation's first great crisis over school desegregation. Portents of things to come in the autumn of 1956 arose as the Board of Education in Little Rock, Arkansas attempted to implement a voluntary plan for desegregation of the city's schools. Orville Faubus, the governor of Arkansas, opposed the board and tried to prevent the integration of Little Rock's Central High School by federalizing the National Guard, attempting as former Mississippi Governor Fielding L. Wright had earlier suggested, to use the state's police power to oppose unpopular federal edicts.

Mississippians took notice and brought the pressure of the newly organized White Citizens' Councils to bear. Senator Eastland feared that Arkansas governor Orville Faubus was a weak link in the call for massive resistance to block integration. Eastland attacked Faubus as being among the "weak-kneed politicians at the state capitols" and said that "If the Southern states are picked off one by one under the damnable doctrine of gradualism I don't know if we can hold out or not."[576]

At the request of several African American ministers, the Rev. Dunbar H. Ogden Jr., a son of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus and pastor of Little Rock's Central Presbyterian Church, accompanied a group of African American children through the angry crowd as they attempted to enter the school to register for classes. As the students walked toward the school on enrollment day, a large crowd had assembled to heckle and watch. Threats of violence had been circulated through the city. Elizabeth Ekford, one of the nine African American students, recalled, that "They moved closer and closer. . . . Somebody started yelling. . . . I tried to see a friendly face somewhere in the crowd—someone who maybe could help. I looked into the face of an old woman, and it seemed a kind face, but when I looked at her again, she spat on me."[577]

Ogden, the pastor of Little Rock's Central Presbyterian Church, was asked to accompany the students because he was president of the Little Rock Ministerial Association. It was hoped that his presence would diffuse possible violence. He was joined by Will Campbell, who came from the University of Mississippi on behalf of the National Council of Churches. Campbell had volunteered to join Ogden after Ogden was unable to secure commitment from any other white minister in Little Rock. He later remarked that Ogden's example and preaching inspired him to write his influential *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (1962), published by the Westminster Press of the U.S.A. Church.[578]

A few days after the initial attempt to enroll the African American students at Central High, Faubus ordered all four Little Rock high schools closed. In a public referendum a few days later, the majority white electorate of Little Rock overwhelmingly supported the governor's action, preferring to have no schools rather than accept integration. At the request of Little Rock's mayor, Eisenhower federalized the Arkansas National Guard, removing the matter from the governor's hands.[579] Ogden instituted a biracial discussion group to support the African American Central High students and their parents who were being subjected to immense segregationist pressure, including physical violence. During the year following, the nine African American students endured physical and verbal abuse. One child, Melba Pattillo, had battery acid thrown into her eyes.[580]

Ogden made common cause with an African American news editor and persevered in his support for the integration of Central High School until the first African American students were graduated—the first African American graduate from a formerly all-white school in the South. By this time, he had become a nationally recognized spokesman for civil rights. He was invited to report on the Little Rock situation over the Voice of America radio network, which translated his remarks into 12 or more languages and broadcast them around the world, his

[576] Cited in David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villiard, 1993): 671.

[577] Lechtreck, *Southern White Minsters and the Civil Rights Movement*, 22-23.

[578] Dunbar H. Ogden III, *"My Father Said Yes:" A White Pastor in Little Rock School Integration* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008): 87.

[579] Ogden, *"My Father Said Yes:"* 50-55, 119-21.

[580] Ogden, *"My Father Said Yes:"* 48-49.

remarks helping to diffuse the communist propaganda in developing nations that Communism offered an equality to its followers that America did not provide. He raised the matter of racial justice with his congregation through sermons. However, because of disagreement with his ideas as well as criticism of "too much involvement in the community," a committee from his congregation requested that Ogden find another position, "not within months, but within weeks." Ogden accepted a call from the First Presbyterian Church of Huntingdon, West Virginia.[581]

The Rev. Marion A. Boggs, a South Carolinian who had served as a Presbyterian pastor in Arkansas since 1920, was then pastor of Little Rock's Second Presbyterian Church. Earlier that year, he had preached a sermon, "A Time for Christian Citizenship," condemning enforced segregation as contradicting "the Christian doctrine of the dignity of man." (Boggs would serve as moderator of the 1960 General Assembly.) Governor Faubus, responding to criticism of his actions from Presbyterian leaders such as Boggs and Ogden, charged that many Arkansas Presbyterians "had been very effectively brainwashed" by left-wingers and Communists, an action that prompted the PCUS Washburn Presbytery to hold a called meeting to voice its outrage at the governor's allegation, charging that "In this hour of crisis, with the educational welfare of thousands of children at stake, the Governor of Arkansas has resorted to name-calling and slander" and stating that, "Our great Church is due an apology." Campbell, writing to *Look Magazine*, June 4, 1957, said that "Some of the racial hate being peddled in the name of Jesus Christ" constituted, "a strange and serious Christian heresy." Even as Ogden lost his pulpit, Faubus was reelected by a large margin. The time for acceptance of racial change had not yet come to the American South. The situation caused an economic crisis in Little Rock. No new industry located in the city from 1958 to 1961.[582]

In 2008, the Rev. Dunbar Ogden's son, Dunbar H. Ogden III, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, published a widely-noted book, *"My Father Said Yes:" A White Pastor in Little Rock School Integration*, detailing his father's actions as recorded by the elder Ogden in a series of interviews in 1977. South African anti-apartheid archbishop Desmond Tutu contributed a foreword to the volume that was published by the Vanderbilt University Press.[583]

Mississippians took notice of the Little Rock situation. Senator Eastland declared that the President's action to send troops to Little Rock, "was an attempt to destroy the social order of the South." Leaders of new nations of what would later be called the Third World—countries that had recently struggled to free themselves from colonial domination by the European powers and which were being courted by the Soviet Union and China—also expressed alarm. Segregationist resistance in Little Rock was "ruining our foreign policy," commented Presbyterian Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. "The effect of this in Asia and Africa will be worse for us than Hungary was for the Russians." The "Lesson of Little Rock" would also be cited by concerned business leaders across the South. In Arkansas, however, Presbyterians—angered by Faubus's charges of Communism in their ranks—by and large closed ranks and supported the Little Rock school board's voluntary desegregation effort against segregationist pressure—an action that created unity among Presbyterians in that state that persisted as later church crises came to the fore.[584]

Segregationist whites across the state were astonished and angered when President Eisenhower sent armed troops to Little Rock. After Eisenhower gave a televised address to explain his action, Jackson station WLBT-TV discontinued its daily broadcast of the national anthem and began programming for the day with an advertisement from the Citizens' Council, which said, "Don't let this happen in Mississippi. Join the Citizens' Councils today."[585]

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[581] Lechtreck, *Southern White Minsters and the Civil Rights Movement*, 24.

[582] *Presbyterian Life* (June 1, 1962): 18-20, 41-42; Frederick J. Heuser, "Presbyterians and the Struggle for Civil Rights, *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Spring/Summer 2012): 10; Elizabeth Jacoway, *Turn Away Thy Son: Little Rock—The Crisis that Shocked the Nation* (New York: Free Press, 2007): 6, 249; *Presbyterian Outlook* 139 (September 23, 1957): 422; Ogden, *"My Father Said Yes:"* 94, 107-14, 148.

[583] See also Karen Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and Resistance and Central High School* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[584] Cited in Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 131.

[585] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years,* 60, 65, 71.

On October 17, 1957, in the aftermath of the President's action to send troops to Little Rock, East Mississippi Presbytery adopted a resolution that said, "The Presbytery of East Mississippi regrets . . . the whole Little Rock situation and calls upon all our people to pray for all persons in places of authority." The resolution was timid but was the first time a Mississippi Presbyterian governing body addressed the unfolding scene. By contrast, supporters of *The Presbyterian Journal* issued a statement that, "Racial integrity is something to be fostered, not . . . broken down, and those who would force a program countenancing and looking to the amalgamation of the races are doing great harm to finding of the ultimate solution."[586]

Sentiments such as these perhaps underlay a resolution presented to the Central Mississippi Presbytery by the session of Jackson's Central Church in the autumn of 1957, which complained that "Efforts to have the churches accept integration have been carried to the extreme." The session believed that there had been "pressurizing" to compel congregations to accept "a particular position" without recognizing that Presbyterians in the Deep South had "attitudes toward the race question [that] run deep with much feeling." The Central Church overture asked that the Assembly desist on the matter of segregation to allow local leaders to deal with the situation in their own way and time, and provide for moderation, with "love and fairness for all."[587]

Legislature Enacts Segregation Measures

During its 1956 sessions, the Mississippi legislature sought to give political form to the religious case for segregation, passing measures to punish with a $1,000 fine and a six-month jail term to any who encouraged, "nonconformance with the established traditions, customs, and usages of the State of Mississippi." A proposal considered in the House and Senate would have deprived religious institutions of their ad valorem tax exemptions if they "practiced integration." Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Disciples of Christ ministers in Greenville all expressed concern about these bills that were widely regarded as aimed at the Roman Catholic Church, which did not administratively separate clergy as completely as in the Protestant churches. Indeed, the archbishop of New Orleans had already begun working to desegregate the parish schools in that diocese, arousing segregationist ire.[588]

Business Leaders Spurred Effort for Change

Pressure for change in the Deep South came not so much from churches, which lacked power even when inclined to press the justice issues they espoused, but from business leaders, who were held almost in reverential awe for the economic power they wielded. Racial upheavals in Atlanta and Little Rock persuaded leaders of industry and commerce that the economic cost of maintaining segregation in those cities was unacceptable. Realizing that new commercial enterprises would not move to the South if social instability or violence prevailed, they, with progressive religious leaders, applied pressure to segregationists to moderate their positions. Mississippi segregationists, however, controlled much of the existing wealth—commercial and agricultural. The process of moderating entrenched segregationist positions therefore was more difficult in Mississippi, seriously retarding the economic development of the state and, as a by-product, contributing to an ever-growing sense of ecclesiastical, professional, and commercial isolation. By 1960, Mississippi segregationists could claim important successes in retarding change, for not a single African American student in the state was attending a white school.[589]

In 1957, as the PCUS Council on Christian Relations pushed for desegregation, the session of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church voted to withhold funds from the council and called for its abolition, declaring that

[586] Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 107-08; see *Presbyterian Outlook* 139 (September 2, 1957): 421.

[587] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (Fall 1957): 15-16, cited in Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 123.

[588] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 98-99.

[589] Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, eds., *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Tony Badger, "*Brown* and Backlash," in Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 42; Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper*, 166.

the PCUS should not take, "any action with reference to current social, political, and economic problems." The Synod of Mississippi took similar action.[590] Public criticism of federal policy in the political sphere mirrored those voiced by white Mississippians in their various church bodies. In March 1958, State Senator Hayden Campbell of Jackson, an active member of the White Citizens' Council, introduced a bill to authorize citizens or counties "to contribute tax money to agencies helping to preserve the sovereignty of states." This would have directly assisted the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission.

In October 1958, Senator John C. Stennis addressed the Oktibbeha County White Citizens' Council at Starkville. He asserted that "To require mixing of the races will destroy the schools. The people of Mississippi will not submit to mixed schools. There is no doubt in my mind at all that any attempt of the Supreme Court to regulate state-supported public school systems is unconstitutional." When the court decrees came forward in the 1960s, many white-controlled Mississippi churches would provide sanctuary for those opposing integration on religious or social grounds by opening private, "Christian" schools that operated on a segregated basis.[591]

Concerns over Reception of Ministers from Other Reformed Traditions

As noted, the opposition of Mississippi Presbyterian segregationists did not occur in a vacuum. Charges circulated also that the PCUS seminaries were no longer doctrinally sound, that the high view of biblical authority once held by their professors was slipping away. First Presbyterian Church in Jackson sent an investigative committee to Columbia Seminary, eventually withholding a large sum of money from that institution in 1960. Congregations in the state also called graduates of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based Westminster Theological Seminary. While the seminary did not advocate segregation, some Westminster graduates in Mississippi and Alabama, as individuals, did vigorous work to preserve segregation. All of these matters proved highly controversial, further dividing the PCUS. These issues were at white heat when the question of realignment of presbytery boundaries within the Synod of Mississippi was raised. The lines of 1901 had been drawn so that meetings could be reached by train. By 1960, the prevalence of paved roads made it possible to consider reducing the number of presbyteries. Many felt that each presbytery needed enough churches to employ an executive secretary and maintain a camp. This was not possible with five presbyteries. Why not condense the number to three? Conservatives predicted dire consequences. They feared the reunion of the U. S. and U.S.A. Churches, and asserted that any reduction in the number of Mississippi presbyteries might reduce the votes opposed to any future reunion of the churches. Again, the matter of race hovered over the deliberations.

[590] "Church Session Withholding Funds for Council Support; Presbyterian Group Hits Pro-Integration Report," *Jackson Daily News* (June 6, 1957): 4; "Pro-Integration Fought By State Presbyterians," *Jackson Daily News* (April 29, 1958).

[591] Vania Blaiklock, "The Unintended Consequences of the Court's Religious Freedom Revolution: A History of White Supremacy and Private Christian Church Schools," *Northwestern University Law Review* (2022). https://northwesternlawreview.org/articles/the-unintended-consequences-of-the-courts-religious-freedom-revolution-a-history-of-white-supremacy-and-private-christian-church-schools/#:~:text=The%20Unintended%20Consequences%20of%20the,and%20Private%20Christian%20Church%20Schools.

Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years,* 78-79*,* 81.

Map Showing Boundaries of the Five Existing PCUS Presbyteries

Map Indicating Proposed Consolidation of Five Presbyteries into Three

By conservative lights, the effort to realign the presbyteries was a power-play—an effort to marginalize their control of the synod. As William G. McAtee described their feelings, "The generally contentious and strident atmosphere at large in Mississippi was having an impact on the Presbyterian Church. In the summer of [1960], the political battle in the Synod of Mississippi was over how to distribute the voting blocs among the adversaries within the five presbyteries. Central Mississippi Presbytery had been the focal point of the conservative voting bloc for years. By this time that bloc was spreading out to the other four presbyteries.

"The influence of the liberal bloc, the one loyal to the national denomination, was being challenged. So, this liberal bloc developed a strategy to contain the influence of the conservative wing by gerrymandering presbytery boundaries to gain a liberal advantage. The five presbyteries in the synod were reduced to three by a 14-vote margin. This configuration would last until a major conservative defection from the denomination to the newly formed Presbyterian Church in America occurred a little more than a decade later."[592]

[592] William G. McAtee, *Transformed: A White Mississippi Pastor's Journey into Civil Rights and Beyond* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011): 51; see William G. McAtee, *Dreams, Where Have You Gone?: Clues for Unity* (Philadelphia: Witherspoon Press, 2006).

Part Three

Mississippi Presbyterians Confront the Civil Rights Movement

In his book, *Southern Churches in Crisis* (1967), Samuel S. Hill Jr. remarked that in his region, religion largely retained its status as, "one of the two or three areas in the compass of southern life which retain their isolation from the major changes now in process." He concluded that except for a few exceptional individuals and locales, Southern churches were captive to regional values. Moreover, the churches tended to be more alike across denominational lines (in allegiance to these "Southern" values) than they were like their sister denominational churches in other regions. Hill argued that Southern white churches "blended in increasingly well with the general culture, imperceptibly espousing regional attitudes and beliefs which had little or no direct relation to the objective message which they hailed as their standard."[593]

In Mississippi, this drawing together of white Christians to protect shared "Southern" values caused Presbyterians to resemble their congregational and revivalistic Baptist neighbors much more closely than in other regions of the country. This situation throws into bold relief difficulty facing that number of Mississippi Presbyterian leaders in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s who adhered to social and political views espoused by most Americans outside the state, as well as to the theological and ethical commitments of the PCUS.[594]

Civil rights historian Carolyn Renée Dupont observed that, "The specific theological commitments of [white] Mississippians formed essential tools in the arsenal with which they deflected the religious critique of segregation," noting that "A gospel that demanded change in the social order stood little chance of converting a people long schooled to regard such a faith as dangerous heresy." A later generation would cite these actions as an example of the Church's "captivity to the surrounding culture." Indeed, they fought for white supremacy in ways that went far beyond preaching their biblical case for it. Many saw the Church as the last bulwark against destruction of arrangements essential to the survival of white civilization in the South. Hence, after the confrontive aspects of the civil rights struggle in Mississippi had largely played themselves out, many Mississippi Presbyterians turned their attention to the formation of a new denomination, citing the maintenance of segregation among the concerns that motivated them to withdraw from the PCUS. Dupont wrote that, "Segregation never aimed only for separation, the assertion of many of its defenders to the contrary. Instead, it calculated to advantage whites in every facet of their lives and to saddle blacks with corresponding and unyielding disadvantages." Indeed, Dupont asserts that

[593] Samuel S. Hill Jr., *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967), 21, 30-31; cf. Samuel S. Hill, *Religion in the Southern States* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983); Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 31; See also Charles Reagan Wilson, *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985); James C. Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[594] By some estimates, 88% of Mississippians adhered to either the Methodist or Baptist Churches, the Baptist being greatly the larger of the two. See Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*, 33, 39.

"a struggle for the soul of American Christianity" lay at the hearts of the civil rights struggle in the churches. Greenville's liberal newspaper editor Hodding Carter Jr. wrote of "a land of churchgoers, who pay little attention to Christian concepts of the brotherhood of man," leading Dupont to conclude that "White supremacy flourished, in part, because of evangelical religion's strength and not in spite of it."[595]

Conservative Mississippi Presbyterians often charged that white PCUS champions of desegregation and Black equality embraced a different gospel. "Integrationists" were perceived to neglect the centrality of individual salvation, the primacy of personal evangelism, and to have embraced a secular and politicized religious agenda. PCUS conservatives defended their theology, preaching that they wanted only to bring the message of salvation—changing society when needed, by the transformation of one soul at a time. They professed to avoid divisive political questions, maintaining that social change could only come as each individual embraced Christ—a religious individualism that disclaimed any role for the Church in addressing the system of segregation or racial injustice. While conservatives advocated decent treatment for all and, indeed, treated the Black persons they knew or employed, with a modicum of compassion—most admitted that wages and other conditions were inadequate, but often justified the existing situation on the basis of Black failings and the inherent inequality of the races.

Conservative Presbyterians maintained that the Church's interest was the reign of Christ in the human heart. They urged that the Church must address the root of humanity's trouble and not spend its time dealing with surface issues that were merely symptomatic of the truly deep concern. However, the doctrinal departures that conservative Christians in various Southern churches identified seemed to intensify in the midst of societal change—change that conservatives perceived the more liberal members of their communions were supporting. Change came very slowly—much more slowly in the Church than in the wider society. The governing structure of the PCUS, mirroring the constitutional processes ordained by the U. S. Constitution, was rich with checks and balances, so that change was difficult to obtain and required years of deliberation, if it could be achieved at all.

There was also the issue of regionalism. Social analysts have long argued that the South has two cultures—a culture of "religion" and a culture of "Southernness"—and that the two have been closely intertwined. After the Civil War, the South's religious separation was more enduring than its political schism. Although several of the smaller religious bodies—Jewish, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Disciples, and Cumberland Presbyterian—quickly resumed communion across sectional lines, the three largest—Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian—persevered in disunity. As late as 1920, churches remained among the South's most distinctly sectional institutions, and while the Methodists finally reunited in 1939, and Southern Baptists pushed North and West with their own special brand of revivalistic evangelism, the Presbyterian Church, U. S. (retaining the name it adopted in 1865 after Lee's surrender at Appomattox), became virtually the only remaining institution in America organized along the lines of the old Confederacy.[596]

According to Hill, purity became the new driving force in Southern religion—purity in doctrine, purity in morals, purity in political allegiance. This was particularly true among Southern Baptists and some Presbyterians. Hill believed that in some quarters, a "truth over persons" philosophy emerged; that is, "treating the tenacious commitment to the truth as more constitutive of Christian character than unconditional love of all persons. . . . The righteous have nothing to learn from the transgressors on any score, nothing to give them except redemption from the particular wrong attribute that is taken to define just who they are. . . . In these moral cases . . . how people behave *is* what defines them; there is nothing to talk about except their perversity on paramount ethical issues" (italics added). Compromise was to be avoided at all costs. "Interpretation amounts to human tampering with self-evident and self-justifying revelation."[597]

[595] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 8, 15-16.

[596] Charles Reagan Wilson, *Judgment & Grace in Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 8; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 161.

[597] Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), xxxviii-xlv, li-lii.

The Year 1960 Marked a Watershed in the Life of Mississippi Presbyterians

In some ways, the restlessness and turmoil that historians considered under the head of the 1960s began in Mississippi where a kind of second Civil War was fought beginning in the mid-1950s. As conservative white people in Middle America moved more and more toward a stance of cultural and political isolation, many vowed to defend their racially segregated way of life against all opposition, even from their ecclesiastical denominations. Many dug in for battle. At the same time, African American churches, long marginalized in Southern life, found strength and moral authority to give leadership for an era of massive change. During this time, many Mississippi Presbyterians assumed a defensive position, reacting to pressures many found difficult to understand or accept. Some believed that moves by the wider Church to accept and foster racial integration represented a loss or at least a serious compromise of the Church's essential mission. Increasingly, the conservative church press echoed with charges that the PCUS and other bodies were drifting away from their previous commitments to biblical authority.

These charges arose despite the fact that American white church membership had risen steadily through the preceding decade to an average of 69% in 1960, with Mississippi and the other Deep South states having the highest levels of affiliation. Southern Baptist membership outpaced all other groups, with Presbyterians continuing to claim smaller and smaller shares of the overall population. Opposition to and fear of Communism was a rallying point for persons across all spectrums of belief. Ministers regularly equated faithful Christianity with good citizenship, though in the South some felt ever-increasing tensions with both the policies of the national government and the publications and pronouncements of the higher governing bodies of their particular denominations.

American racial anxieties reached a flash point on December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus in downtown Montgomery, Alabama, triggering a yearlong boycott of the city bus lines that enforced segregated seating, with African Americans required to sit at the back of the bus. The boycott was carried out on the principles of nonviolent resistance put forward by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a young Black pastor from Atlanta, little known then, among the South's white Presbyterians. When the civil authorities in Montgomery relented and desegregated the busses, a nationwide path toward change was opened—a path that did not advance evenly or smoothly, but which seemed irreversible.[598]

The year 1960 marked a watershed in the life of Mississippi's Presbyterians, as the PCUS synods were realigned, indirectly creating a means by which the long-deferred issue of black-white relations could be given greater attention. The problem of race was at once social, economic, and religious. One of the state's contemporary Presbyterian historians, the Rev. John M. Wilson, a son of the Leland Church, explained that "In the economic sphere, the affluent had been able to absorb the terrific cost of keeping the Negro uneducated, since their income had been sufficient to allow such a luxury." Yet, careful observers knew that the situation could no longer be maintained. *The Holly Springs South Reporter* editorialized about the city in 1951 that, "the 'Pilgrimage Atmosphere' is beautiful, wonderful, inspiring. But it won't pay the bills of the constantly increasing cost of living and doing business as will the smokestacks of balanced agriculture and industry." To bring new industry and other enterprises of financial importance to the state, many Mississippians understood that the causes of the state's underlying racial discord would have to be addressed. It was at this place that the state's white-controlled religious bodies were caught woefully unprepared to help.[599]

As the Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger, then executive secretary of the Presbytery of Central Mississippi, recalled, "Like the civil war of the 1860s, the 1960s was a fury of emotional, social, racial, and political disturbances." In the early 1960s, the Cold War heated up again and once more occasioned major public attention. The downing of an American spy plane over the Soviet Union in May 1960 shattered the relative peace of the Eisenhower years and precipitated several confrontational events in the first two years of Kennedy's administration. The building of the Berlin Wall, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis all marshaled public opinion in an angry,

[598] Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[599] John M. Wilson, "St. Andrew Presbytery of North Mississippi: A Study of Ideal and Real Values in Church Participation" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Mississippi, 1971; *Holly Springs South Reporter* (November 29, 1951).

defensive way. Politicians urged that internal controversies be muted "to win the cold war." These events served to delay the ministry of reconciliation that both whites and African Americans so earnestly needed.

Discussion of political, economic, and even religious matters carried different connotations in the South. Whereas other parts of the country carried on political debates about conservatism and liberalism in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s with the color of farm *versus* city, union *versus* management, isolationist *versus* internationalist, discussions of almost any question in the South were almost always tinged with questions about race, and this was also and especially true in Church discussions. Southern Presbyterians, almost all of whom maintained conservative opinions on theological matters, were nonetheless branded liberals if they advocated any change in the practice of racial segregation. Indeed, PCUS historian Joel L. Alvis Jr. has written that "race . . . was one of the real dividing issues for defining liberalism and conservatism within the denomination."[600]

Christianity Today, an influential evangelical weekly closely aligned with conservative Presbyterian editor L. Nelson Bell and the Billy Graham evangelistic organization, reported, May 23, 1960, that the PCUS was "seriously divided" on the question of segregation. That year, the General Assembly repeated its recommendation that church institutions be opened to qualified students, "without regard to social distinctions." Though conservatives seemed to predominate in Mississippi, this was not the case in other PCUS synods, with the effect that to view the scene from a Mississippi PCUS perspective gave a skewed picture of attitudes held in the wider church beyond. Segregationists often viewed themselves as a persecuted minority, fearing other white Southerners as much as they feared the civil rights movement or the federal government. Conservatives in the PCUS sensed that their own denomination, long a bastion of resistance against theological and social change, was itself changing. Many felt these changes verged on apostasy. The Church was turning inward against itself, and the locus of that turmoil was in the Magnolia State. In both religious and political life, a citadel mentality was forming. Mississippi would be the last place for the defense of the old ways—beliefs and practices that white conservatives believed were deeply rooted in Scripture.

Feeling besieged by outsiders, even within their own denominations, church members tended to rally around their own doctrinal distinctives and social positions. There was a club-like atmosphere among churches that tended to be socially homogeneous communities. Indeed, other than occasional acquaintances, most church members lived among people who were like themselves—denominationally, financially, racially. Evangelical Christians were more likely than others to form their friendships and conduct their social lives in the close space of their religious congregations, thereby abetting the tendency toward inward focus in their circles of human interaction. The beliefs and attitudes of fellow members were more important than that of the minister. Ministers came and went—indeed, clergymen were among the most mobile persons in Southern society, and unless a particular minister's tenure was very long, they were seen as outsiders.

Moreover, as moral institutions, churches did not simply reflect society; in many ways, they molded it. As Carolyn Renée Dupont has written, "Segregated Sabbaths did not passively reflect the culture. To the contrary, religion helped make and maintain this racially divided world." Racial concerns kept the churches apart along sectional lines, and Mississippians were more adamant than most. When Methodists adopted their Plan of Union in 1939, a single conference—North Mississippi—refused to endorse it, although it did become part of the realigned Methodist Church.[601] In only two of the Methodist Church's Southern conferences (out of 139 nationwide) had segregationists been able to muster a majority vote against desegregation of their denomination in 1957. The two conferences were Alabama-West Florida and North Mississippi. Similar situations appeared a decade later among Mississippi Presbyterians.[602]

[600] Alvis, *Religion & Race*, 60.

[601] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 26. See Peter C. Murray, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

[602] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 269.

The Civil Rights Movement Comes to Mississippi

Jackson attorney Ross Barnett, a deacon and Sunday school teacher in the city's First Baptist Church, the state's largest religious congregation, was inaugurated as governor in 1960, having won election on a segregationist platform. His stance against racial mixing was not surprising, for as political historian Earl Black has noted, many politicians of that era found that anti-integration platforms enhanced their electability. Not all were pleased. Correspondent Claude Sitton of *The New York Times* quoted Presbyterian elder George McLean, editor of *The Tupelo Daily Journal*, "I think Barnett is a throwback to 50 years ago. The absurdities that have come as a result are very definitely going to move us toward a more progressive era. I think the [White Citizens'] Councils are a fading movement. They may have an occasional upsurge, but I think it's on the ebb tide."[603]

Later that year, presidential nominee John F. Kennedy, addressing the Liberal Party of New York, pledged "to carry out his policies of 'equal access' to everything by both races." But as Kennedy advanced toward the presidency, white Mississippians became increasingly disenchanted with the Democratic Party. Attempts were made in 1960 to have slates of un-pledged electors on the presidential ballot all across the South. A rally promoting an un-pledged slate was held in Jackson on June 17, with attendance boosted, no doubt, by the Supreme Court's unpopular school prayer decision issued a few days before.[604] Barnett led a slate of un-pledged electors for the 1960 presidential election on the ground that the national parties should have to make concessions in favor of states' rights to gain the Mississippi electors' votes. Barnett's ploy was ultimately unsuccessful, although it kept him in the spotlight as a crusader against the powerful "outside interests," which many believed were maliciously aligned against the interests of conservative, white people in the South. Mississippi's electoral votes were cast neither for Senator Kennedy, the Democratic nominee and a Roman Catholic, or for Richard M. Nixon, a nominal Protestant, and the candidate of the Republicans—neither of whom were then perceived as strong supporters of civil rights. Instead, the state's all-white slate of electors voted for the segregationist Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd.[605]

In many ways, this distancing of white Mississippi voters from their traditional allegiance to the Democratic Party paralleled the feeling some had toward the Presbyterian Church, U. S. Many Mississippi Presbyterians had been perplexed in 1959 when the Rev. Ben Lacy Rose stated in his monthly *Presbyterian Survey* column that it was possible for a Presbyterian also to be a Communist. Further disaffection with the denominational magazine came when Editor Ben Hartley indicated that the magazine would support the civil rights movement. A letter to the editor criticized the civil rights movement, comparing it to Communism. In the next few years, the magazine was repeatedly accused of harboring Communist sympathies. During the 1960 presidential campaign, *The Survey* also refused to argue on religious grounds that a Roman Catholic should not be elected president even though many notable Protestant religious leaders had no hesitancy about opposing the idea of a Catholic president.[606]

The first direct-action civil rights protest in Mississippi took place on the Gulf Coast, Sunday, April 24, 1960, when eight African American citizens waded into the water from a traditionally all-white beach near Biloxi. A riot ensued that left ten wounded by gunfire with four others injured in fighting. On March 27, 1961, students from Tougaloo College staged a "read-in" at the all-white Jackson Municipal Library on North State Street, just blocks from the city's First Presbyterian Church. It was the first attempt to integrate public facilities in Jackson. The students were arrested and jailed. Two days later, 50 students from Jackson State College for Negroes marched on the jail but were met by police with clubs, tear gas, and two German shepherd dogs.

That summer, as college students and others from out of state came to Mississippi to assist local activists, some white church members in the city feared that Black persons might appear at their church doors. Mayor Allen Thompson advised his pastor at Galloway Memorial Methodist Church that he had ordered police to keep the activists out of the churches. Though the Rev. W. B. Selah, pastor of Galloway, objected to what he saw as a civil

[603] See Earl Black, *Southern Governors and Civil Rights: Racial Segregation as a Campaign Issue in the Second Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[604] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 213.

[605] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 22.

[606] Overbeck, "The Rise and Fall of Presbyterian Official Journals," 99-100.

usurpation of church authority, the official boards of Galloway Methodist and First Christian Church, quickly followed the 1954 action of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church and voted to close their doors to all African American visitors. But unlike the situation at First Presbyterian, the actions at Galloway and First Christian were taken by lay boards over the objections of the pastors. No attempts were made by civil rights workers to visit white controlled Jackson churches at this time.[607]

The civil rights struggle came to Mississippi in earnest when the so-called Freedom Riders arrived in the state in May 1961. On Mothers' Day, May 14, their bus was firebombed on the outskirts of Anniston, Alabama. The riders continued in a replacement bus with safe passage arranged by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, with the understanding that they would be arrested on arrival in Jackson. On May 24, 1961, a racially mixed busload of Freedom Riders arrived in Jackson. Police immediately arrested two Black women and eight Black men for entering the white waiting room at the Greyhound station. All were taken to the city jail. The next day, Governor Barnett declared that, "There is too much work to be done in Mississippi for us to have to put up with outside agitators trying to stir up our people for no good cause." Later, demonstrators were arrested and sentenced for integrating the white waiting room at Jackson's Illinois Central Railroad station.[608] Soon, 164 Freedom Riders were arrested. Some were held in temporary compounds at the state fairgrounds. One of them, the Rev. Robert Pierson of Evanston, Illinois, was an Episcopal priest and the son-in-law of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Due to conditions in the Jackson jails, many of the demonstrators were transferred to Parchman State Penitentiary in the Mississippi Delta.[609] There, some of them were visited by a Glencoe, Illinois rabbi named Henry Swartzchild, as well as Rabbi Perry Nussbaum of Jackson.[610] Another group of Freedom Riders headed to McComb to conduct a voter registration drive that resulted in arrests, confrontations, a student walkout, and expulsions from school. Attempts were made to integrate the local bus station—these activities resulting in many arrests.[611]

Governor Barnett made use of the State Sovereignty Commission to defend prevailing segregation laws and policies. Director Erle E. Johnston, who had served as a publicist for both of Barnett's gubernatorial campaigns, as well as for Hugh White and John Stennis, wrote speeches for Barnett and other state officials. Johnston was a third-generation member, deacon, and Sunday school teacher in the Forest, Mississippi, Presbyterian Church. He enlisted the aid of his pastor, the Rev. A. H. Freundt Jr., to write for the White Citizens' Council newspaper.

Events at Galloway Methodist Foreshadowed Things to Come

The Rev. W. B. Selah, pastor of Galloway Memorial Methodist Church two blocks south of the state capitol, was a seasoned pastor. He had served his Jackson congregation—the state's largest white-controlled Methodist Church—for 18 years. During this time, he had staked out a position as a moderate voice in the state's troubled racial discussions. In the summer of 1961, as workers with the Congress of Racial Equality came to Jackson to push for desegregation of public facilities and services under the authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission

[607] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 45-46.

[608] Desegregation of railroad station waiting rooms and accommodations on passenger trains proved a complicated, recalcitrant affair. November 1955, the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled that segregation of interstate passengers on trains and busses, and in terminals and depots, was contrary to the law. By the end of the 1950s, most railroads that operated in the South had eliminated all segregation, although local exceptions, as in Jackson, persisted longer, often enforced by unauthorized persons, such as ticket agents. As late as February 1961, the Central of Georgia Railway advertised in public schedules that seats on its Atlanta-Savannah streamliner were reserved "for white passengers." The Interstate Commerce Commission had no authority to regulate *intrastate* travel, but the ICC and the Justice Department pressed the matter, so that most enforced segregation was ended by 1964. However, signs designating waiting rooms "For Colored" remained for years afterward. John Edward Wilz, "When Jim Crow Rode the Rails," 47.

[609] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 105, 120-26, 128-34.

[610] Bauman and Kalin, *The Quiet Voices*, 75-77.

[611] Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

(which had issued orders to desegregate such facilities and services), the official board at Galloway met on June 12. Fearing that there might also be an attempt by these persons to integrate churches, the board adopted a resolution: "That the greeters or ushers of this church are hereby instructed to decline to admit any persons, white or colored who, in the judgment of the greeters or ushers, seek admission for the purpose of creating an incident resulting in a breach of the peace." Selah opposed the motion, declaring that to turn anyone away was to violate the very nature of the Church. He said, "Now, gentlemen, let me reiterate this Christian principle—there can be no color bar before the cross of Christ!" Only one lay leader spoke in support of Selah, and the resolution was adopted by an overwhelming margin.[612]

Visiting Racially Mixed Group Welcomed at First Presbyterian, Tupelo

Boy Scouts took an oath to be reverent and, as a racially mixed group, they traveled home through Mississippi from a Pennsylvania jamboree. Their leader made arrangements for them to go to church. Difficulties arose in Jackson, Mississippi—so the scouts instead attended a service in Tupelo. On Sunday, July 22, 1962, the usual order of things was somewhat different, as the group of Boy Scouts arrived in two buses to attend the service. Their leader had phoned the pastor, the Rev. George W. Long Jr., a day earlier to inquire about their attendance. The leader wanted to make sure they would be welcomed because among the scouts were two young Black youths. Long—known as a theological conservative—said they would be welcomed. However, a few of the church officers as well as townspeople were opposed.

As Robert Blade recorded the story, "On that sunny Sunday morning, N. E. Dacus, a Baptist and a stalwart segregationist, stood on the sidewalk across from the church watching for the buses carrying the Scouts. Dacus was a Tupelo businessman who owned a drug manufacturing company, but his passion was combating liberals wherever he found them. He had heard about the Scouts from one of the elders and decided to keep an eye on the church to see what happened. Just outside First Presbyterian, in the garden area, tempers were getting out of hand. A few of the members were loudly vowing to block the church doors to keep the black Scouts from entering." Long, newspaper editor George McLean, and other moderate members of the congregation, managed to tone things down.

"The Scouts are our guests," they told the disaffected members. "If you can't handle that, then it would be best if you went home." Some did, but others stayed for the service, which was conducted without undue interruption. Long welcomed the visitors, and afterward, the scouts boarded their busses and proceeded on their journey. Dacus, however, telephoned the State Sovereignty Commission—an agency of the Mississippi state government, created in 1956 to uphold segregation and promote the segregationist view of states' rights—asking that an investigator come to Tupelo.

Dacus told Tom Scarbrough, an interviewer sent by the Sovereignty Commission, that it was his understanding that the group had tried to make arrangements to visit the First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, but that the request had been refused. Dacus and Scarbrough went to see Rubel Bell, an elder of the Tupelo Church. Bell had disapproved of the admission of the Negro scouts and had told Long that he and other church members intended to cut off their financial contributions as a result. Scarbrough wrote of his visit with Dacus and Bell that, "Both of these gentlemen are very well informed on subversiveness in most all of its forms." The incident did not have lasting negative consequences for the congregation. As Blade wrote, "That small incident at First Presbyterian was about as close as Tupelo got to the tragic racial violence that began to engulf the state in 1961."[613]

Crisis after crisis came to the state, especially after violence in the autumn of 1962 over the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. Further unwelcome national attention came after Medgar Evers,

[612] W. J. Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway: One Church's Struggle with Social Change* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980): 3-5.

[613] Robert Blade, *Tupelo Man: The Life and Times of George McLean, A Most Peculiar Newspaper Publisher* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012): 173-74; cf. Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States' Rights* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001).

a Jackson civil rights leader, began organizing boycotts of service stations that did not allow African Americans to use their facilities. On June 12, 1963, one day after Alabama governor George Wallace had "stood in the schoolhouse door" at the University of Alabama, against integration, Evers was murdered in the driveway of his West Jackson home by Greenwood white supremacist Byron de la Beckwith. District Attorney William Waller conducted a strong prosecution, but two trials ended with hung juries, so that Beckwith initially went free. Former Governor Barnett, hoping to earn political capital with conservatives, attended the trial, in order to be seen with Beckwith and his team of defense attorneys. (Waller was elected governor in 1971, due in part to support from African Americans who had been unable to vote and hence were ineligible for jury duty during the Beckwith trials of 1964.)[614]

President Kennedy had vowed to end segregation and had sent a civil rights message to Congress on February 28, 1963. Later, prompted by violence in Birmingham and elsewhere, he submitted a new, stronger civil rights program on June 19. Among the actions contemplated were legislation to require equal access to all public accommodations, such as hotels, restaurants, and stores, authorization for the attorney general to bring suits to desegregate schools, and withholding of federal funds from any program where racial discrimination was practiced. Senators Stennis and Eastland immediately launched a filibuster, and Barnett flew to Washington to testify against the bill. He blamed communists for racial agitation in Mississippi. But national publicity, including television pictures of racial injustices in Mississippi and Alabama, coupled with the Evers murder, stirred many in Congress who had never before supported civil rights legislation.[615]

As workers from the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) came to Mississippi, many whites feared that radical elements might be able to impose property redistribution, which would destroy the economic basis of much white power and wealth. The Ku Klux Klan, which had been dormant in Mississippi, began reorganizing, soon achieving a membership of 7,000. The Klan distributed circulars calling "every Christian, American Anglo-Saxon" to defend "our constitutional republic by every means" at their command. Another racist group, calling itself Americans for Preservation of the White Race, was formed in Natchez. It conducted a membership drive, describing itself as dedicated to "keeping the white man white and the black man black, like God intended."[616]

Though some leaders had called for restraint and order, others hinted of bloodshed, and on June 21, 1964, three civil rights workers were murdered near Philadelphia, Mississippi. James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman had driven from Meridian to Philadelphia to investigate a church burning. They pulled into the parking lot of the First Methodist Church to change a tire. They were approached by the town deputy and his assistant and taken to the city jail. They were detained a few hours and then released. Then the three vanished. Their bodies were not found for 44 days when, after an extensive FBI investigation, they were found buried deep within an earthen dam several miles from Philadelphia. The incident galvanized attention on Mississippi. As William G. McAtee—then serving as pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Amory, wrote: "It was a very threatening and uncertain time."[617]

On the day following Evers' murder, the Synod of Mississippi (PCUS) had been meeting on the other side of Jackson. Effort was made to formulate some response to the murder. Because of white opposition to civil rights, the most that could be passed was a brief resolution deploring violence. For conservative Mississippi Presbyterians, however, the most pressing issue before local church governing bodies of the era was the effort by some Black and white persons, to break down the wall of segregation that had been erected to prohibit African American persons from attending or seeking membership in all-white Presbyterian congregations. Many believed such persons were not coming to worship but to advance a social agenda aimed at mixing the races. Others believed that if the visitors were allowed to enter, divisions in the congregations would arise, hindering the work of the gospel. The churches

[614] Beckwith was convicted in a 1994 retrial; see Adam Nossiter, *Of Long Memory: Mississippi and the Murder of Medgar Evers* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1994).

[615] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 238-41.

[616] *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 248-49.

[617] *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 274; see also Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 140-41.

were deadlocked over the matter, with many pastors afraid for their livelihoods if they followed the dictates of conscience on the matter.[618] A few pastors, however, were true segregationists.

Mississippi Church Segregation was an Embarrassment to PCUS Overseas Missionaries

To the consternation of PCUS overseas missionaries and the embarrassment of the wider Church, as well as the satisfaction of communists everywhere, a majority of Mississippi Presbyterians insisted that persons of color must worship God separately and that those who tried to worship with whites be subjected to humiliation, arrest, and imprisonment. Doubtless some stayed away on those tense Sundays when the confrontations occurred. Indeed, it was in this period that Mississippi membership in the PCUS began its long, slow decline. It was the Mississippi Church's most shameful hour since slavery. The pages of *The Presbyterian Outlook* were filled with letters from leaders of the world missionary and ecumenical movements, appealing for change in Southern churches, to remove what they saw as an obstacle to the missionary cause by the segregationist policies enforced by the Southern white-controlled religious organizations. These events affected the Magnolia State's economic life. As Charles C. Bolton wrote, "During this era (1965) the State of Mississippi could not even sell its bonds, so great was the stigma attached to its name."[619]

Dwyn Milton Mounger remembered that "In all the turmoil, in spite of the fact that we took pride in being 'Bible Believing' and 'conservative,' it was a bit naïve of us to think that pastors and churches would or could escape the controversy." Many pulpits, in the need to maintain "spirituality" of religion and the "separation of church and state," were strangely silent. Other congregations, even though they fervently accepted Christ's great challenge to go forth and preach his good news and teach and minister to people in foreign climes—under the stress of segregationist pressures—delegated ushers to turn peaceful African Americans and their white supporters away from their local churches to "avoid disturbances" to worship that would "interfere with the preaching of the gospel." Other congregations put pressure on pastors who spoke out even modestly for fairness and moderation, so that such men felt compelled to move on to places where racial strife was less evident or disturbing, or where the people were more accepting of differences of race and social background.

Some were threatened and felt that their families were not safe, and indeed, crosses were burned in several Presbyterian yards around the state. As James W. Silver, an outspoken University of Mississippi professor, expressed it, "In the past year or two, many individual preachers and a few ministerial groups have made courageous stands, but the church as a whole has placed its banner with the status quo." Silver remarked that, "Ministers who did the most talking about segregation were for it, prompted no doubt by 'an echo from the pew,' and perhaps by the fear of being branded as 'Red-tinged' radicals.'" Mississippi churches of all denominations experienced a great exodus of their younger and best-educated clergy. After this, the state's churches experienced ongoing difficulty in recruiting younger clergy willing to locate within the state.[620]

In a time and place when almost everyone was a church member, the churches naturally played central roles in the lives of their communities. The lay leaders of the churches were the leaders of their towns. In some locales, the Presbyterian session and the public school board were composed of virtually the same people, so ingrained was the long-standing Mississippi Presbyterian support for public education. Although many white Christians, as well as their churches, as organized institutions, offered modest assistance and expressed a paternalistic sort of interracial help and encouragement, they also played a role, as Dupont said, "in the constellation of institutions that collectively consigned Mississippi's African American citizens to lives of limited opportunity, poverty, and fear."

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[618] Ralph McGill, "The Agony of the Southern Minister," *New York Times Magazine* (September 27, 1959): 16, 57-60; Robert Paul Sessions, "Are Southern Ministers Failing the South?" *Saturday Evening Post* 234 (May 13, 1961): 37, 82-88; Samuel Southard, "Are Southern Churches Silent?" *Christian Century* 80 (November 20, 1963): 1429-32.

[619] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 120.

[620] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 24; James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964): 53.

Yet, in many communities, Black and white lived on the same streets, buried their dead in the same cemeteries, and Black sweat provided the labor for white-owned farms and income from Black labor created wealth that provided the money that white people, in turn, contributed to their churches.[621] Segregation created a two-tiered system that maintained Black poverty, a segregated school system that perpetuated Black ignorance, an exclusionary voter registration system that rendered Blacks powerless, a social system that required Black deference, and a judicial system that assumed Black criminality. One might add that the segregated Presbyterian religious structure often denied Black worshipers the best-educated and most highly skilled ministers.[622]

Though forced to accept Black emancipation, following the Civil War, whites refused to accept African American social or political equality. They expected the freed people to continue in ecclesiastical submission if they wished to worship with whites—as they had before the Civil War. As Dupont observed, "Even before the establishment of *de jure* segregation in the 1890s and early 1900s, the South's evangelical churches practiced segregation because whites refused to allow the freed people equality in the church." Indeed, segregation in the churches actually preceded and gave a template for segregation in the wider society.[623] Indeed, Jemar Tisby has remarked that, "In late twentieth century America, *evangelicalism* took on a decidedly more political tone" (italics his).[624]

It is important to notice that the vocal segregationist wing of the white-controlled Southern churches was relatively small in proportion to the total church membership of the region, though such persons were highly motivated to impose their views on more timid individuals who might otherwise have accepted change, so that as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. charged in his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" (1963), many decent individuals remained silent and that, with a few exceptions, vocal segregationist advocacy in the white-controlled churches was confined to vigorous and highly determined individuals.

African American leaders largely discounted the opposition of the white churches. As David Chappell has said, "Probably the most important reason [the African American activists] saw through it was that the religious leadership of the white South showed none of the militancy and discipline of the [segregationist] political leadership." The historically significant failure of [conservatives in] the white southern churches, said Chappell, "was their inability to live up to the militant image that Southern politicians had shown." The general restraint shown by segregationist church leaders poses a striking contrast to the fiery rhetoric of segregationist Southern politicians.

There were exceptions, of course, and many of these were in Mississippi where there was significant opposition to racial change on the part of church leaders. This situation threw into bold relief the persistent divergence of Mississippi churches from the majority positions and pronouncements of their wider ecclesiastical communions.[625]

Seen in this context, the quarrels over racial desegregation, as they were carried out among Presbyterians, were but another chapter in an old Presbyterian debate. Fred J. Hood, a scholar of 19th century Presbyterian history in the Middle and Southern states, has identified this debate as a continuation of the Old School-New School rift, which though supposedly resolved through mergers of the two groups in the 19th century, in actuality continued beneath the surface, as the presenting issues for new expressions of the old controversies came forth in various forms in succeeding generations. Hood explained that in the early 19th century, New School Presbyterians had worked diligently to influence and mold the wider society through preaching and educational work, and in support for various independent missionary societies, even though they eventually [and especially in the South] gave up their focus on social change and directed their efforts toward revivalism and "saving of souls," whereas many Old School Presbyterians continued the broader effort to mold the entire society to Christian ideals. Then, in the 20th century as the so-called "Social Gospel" appeared to be something new on the American scene, its practitioners could with some credibility be seen as "latter-day exponents of the 'Old School' [Presbyterians]." By these lights,

621 Dupont, *Mississippi* Praying, 16, 26-27.
622 Dupont, *Mississippi* Praying, 16-17.
623 Dupont, *Mississippi* Praying, 28.
624 Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 154.
625 Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 105, 107.

conservative Mississippi Presbyterians, particularly with their emphasis on personal evangelism, were in many ways the inheritors of the Southern New School tradition.[626]

Southern Style Segregation was 20th Century Innovation

This was the period in which many Presbyterian congregations in the South adopted policies with respect to "persons who appear at our Church with the apparent intent of attending services for any reason other than in a true spirit of worship." These were to be turned away. These persons were African Americans who wished to worship with whites, as well as those who supported their efforts. Yet, segregation according to race or social standing had been manifest in Christian worship since biblical times and had been one of the abuses that called forth the Epistle of James. The provision of finer pews for wealthy worshipers or those with positions in the nobility or aristocracy had long been known in Europe, the United Kingdom, and in colonial America. This sort of segregation, however, took on new forms in the American South following the Civil War.

As Chappell pointed out on the matter of excluding African Americans from worship in the all-white churches, segregationists sought to justify what was obviously an innovation, as Black and white had previously worshiped in the same rooms, if not always in the same pews throughout the nation both before and in the years immediately after the Civil War. (Some freed slaves had worshiped in Mississippi congregations as late as the 1930s.)[627]

Even after Blacks withdrew or were set off into separate congregations and denominations, African American servants had been expected and welcomed at weddings, funerals, and baptisms in white churches throughout the period when civil laws enforced segregation in public places—gestures that reflected a white religious effort to mitigate in at least a small way a few of the injuries and humiliations imposed by the Jim Crow system.[628] The Rev. Albert H. Freundt Jr., pastor at the Forest Presbyterian Church, writing in an article for the Citizens' Council newspaper, noted that such presence by African American visitors had been common for many years in the Presbyterian Church at Forest, Mississippi, of which he was pastor (1956-1965).[629] Such gestures, of course, were limited and paternalistic. Black persons were not allowed to enter the white churches on their own initiative. Chappell notes that, "This was a basic contradiction in the white supremacy system. Where that system was defined as separation, and separation was defined as bigotry, these examples [were intended to] prove that they were not bigots, that they were not rigid. But the same examples undermined their claim that their society had a tradition of strict separation that needed to be maintained and defended."[630] Segregationists argued that freed slaves had taken the initiative to form their own churches (a statement that was only partially true) and stated that measures to exclude Negro visitors during the 1950s and '60s had come about only in response to "outside agitation," which brought African Americans and white activists to the doors of white-controlled churches "for inappropriate reasons."

In 1957, the Rev. Ben Lacy Rose, a professor of preaching and pastoral theology at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, explored the biblical, theological, and polity dimensions of interracial worship in an article entitled "Racial Segregation in the Church" that appeared in *The Presbyterian Outlook*. The article was subsequently reprinted and given wide distribution. Rose emphasized that while segregation had emerged as a custom after the Civil War, it had never been sanctioned by the General Assembly. He challenged the assumption that individual

[626] Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States, 1783-1837* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1980): 203.

[627] Inez Berryhill Adams, niece of the Rev. C. Z. Berryhill, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Holly Springs, remembered "when black members still worshiped in the church's gallery." Others recalled the sound as they climbed a narrow, spiraling 36-stair circular stairwell in the church's south tower to reach the high gallery. Inez Berryhill Adams, with Tom Adams, *The Class of 1912* (Lafayette, Calif., Thomas-Berryhill Press, 1995): 30-31.

[628] Black servants were expected and welcome to attend "family occasions," such as weddings or funerals, in most white-controlled churches. Whites did the same in African American congregations.

[629] Albert H. Freundt Jr., "Oxford Clergy Wrong in Calling for 'Repentance!'" *The Citizen* (October 1962): 2-3.

[630] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 146.

church officers might arbitrarily decide who would be seated for worship, or where. In his monthly *Presbyterian Survey* column, he wrote that, "Neither elders nor deacons have a right to determine who may worship God in his own house." After this, Rose was branded a liberal by segregationists across the PCUS.[631]

By the 1950s, few remembered (or chose to recall) that Black and white had worshiped together in American churches. The difference, of course, was that in olden times, the arrangements had never implied social equality—indeed, the arrangements had been instituted to perpetuate the subordinate status of African American worshipers and to maintain control over them. Because their subservient position was clearly indicated by seating them in balconies or other designated pews, no objection was raised by whites; indeed, such practices reinforced the myth that servants, although enslaved by masters or employed for wages were, in fact, part of the family. As Dupont explained, "African Americans attended these events not as equal participants in a religious community, but rather as metaphoric children within an extended family—affectionate members, beholden both to the care and authority of the white parents."[632] Indeed, such a virulently racist writer as the Rev. Thomas Cary Johnson, the unreconstructed professor of ecclesiastical history at Union Seminary in Richmond, had told the Presbyterian Historical Society, in a paper read before it at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 16, 1900, and subsequently published in *The Union Seminary Magazine* that, "The Presbyterian Church, South, welcomes the negro [*sic*] to full membership in its white churches, provided he does not come in such numbers as to give him a real voice in the election of officers; and . . . it welcomes to its presbyteries colored brethren who preach to negro churches, provided they do not come in sufficient numbers to exercise any real control in the presbyteries." But when the civil rights movement began, segregationists of the churches in Mississippi had largely forgotten or retreated from even the bare concession to ecclesiastical fellowship that Johnson had so many years before been willing to allow.

Upon receiving its first African American member in the era of civil rights, the First (Scots) Presbyterian Church of Charleston, South Carolina, recited the history of Black members' participation in its early life from the time of the congregation's organization in 1819 through the Civil War, but even though Chinese persons were welcomed in the white churches in some parts of Mississippi,[633] the idea of an African American entering the church and selecting his or her own pew—perhaps next to a white lady—remained an idea repugnant to the state's segregationists.[634]

Brookhaven Session Passes Segregation Resolution over Pastor McAtee's Objections

White-controlled Southern churches, having apparently never considered the formal exclusion of African American worshipers previously, had simply depended on custom and habit to maintain the general segregation of the races in church life as elsewhere in society. No formal segregation rules seem to have been adopted in Southern churches prior to 1950. But in the autumn of 1957, some Southern congregations began to add such exclusions to their bylaws—perhaps in reaction to the forced integration of public schools in Little Rock.[635]

In the closing months of 1957, four months before he suffered a fatal heart attack, the elders of the Brookhaven Church unanimously passed a resolution supporting segregation on an allegedly biblical basis over the objections of their longtime pastor, the Rev. W. H. McAtee. Like William Winter, McAtee had commanded Negro soldiers

631 *Presbyterian Survey* (January 1964): 28.

632 Dupont, *Mississippi* Praying, 30.

633 Joe Tong Im, of Chinese descent was early a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Cleveland. Until the mid-20th century, Chinese students were not permitted in white public schools, but many Chinese resisted sending their children to the poor-quality Black schools, creating a sort of "race-in-between." One private effort to provide better education took place in the Rosedale Presbyterian Church. See Robert Milton Winter, "Rosedale Presbyterians and the Mississippi Chinese: Changing Concepts of Equality in An Aristocratic Southern Town," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (Summer 2000): 169-73.

634 "First Presbyterian Church to Accept Negro as Member," *Charleston* [West Virginia] *Daily Mail* (September 9, 1960).

635 See Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Knoph, 2006); Samuel Southard, "Segregation and Southern Churches," *Journal of Religion and Health* 1 (April 1962): 197-221.

during World War II and had worked with Mexican immigrants in the Mississippi Delta, developing his interest in and understanding of their needs. It was also the period when the controversy over the reception of ministers from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—also tinged with racial implications—was played out. His son, the Rev. William Graeber McAtee later wrote that, "I am certain these two stress factors contributed to his heart attack." By the younger McAtee's recollection, his father

> was faithful to the very end. His pastoral register was up to date before he left on Monday for Memphis to attend a meeting of Southwestern's trustees. He passed away the following day. He had prepared the bulletin for the following Sunday. He started an entry with sermon title, text, and hymns. For some reason he changed at the last minute to another different service. The sermon he deleted was titled, 'Face to Face with God,' and his text was Genesis 32:30, 'I saw God face-to-face, but I am still alive.'

William G. McAtee wrote: "I can't help but wonder if he had a premonition of what was coming. He made 39 pastoral visits the week before he died. During his 15 years at Brookhaven, he carefully recorded some 15,000 pastoral visits."[636]

—photo from William G. McAtee collection.

The Rev. W. H. McAtee began an outreach to Mexican farmers near his church at Shaw, Mississippi. By 1939 the Mexican congregation enrolled sixty-six members. Mrs. McAtee played the piano for her husband's mission services. Dr. McAtee is shown with a young parishioner at his church in Brookhaven at Easter in 1951.

[636] McAtee Archives-Family History, part iii. William G. McAtee Collection. Used with permission.

Events in Memphis Illustrated the Developing Situation

On August 19, 1957, the women of the Second Presbyterian Church in that city petitioned the session to permit Negro women from the presbytery's African American congregations to attend an upcoming regional meeting of Presbyterian women to be hosted by Second Presbyterian's women's organization. The elders declined and stated themselves, "opposed to integration in our conferences and institutions," and declared further, "that our staff be instructed not to attend or promote any integrated meetings, nor send any funds to any conferences or institutions that are practicing integration."[637] On October 7, Second Presbyterian's session, apparently with the initiative and approval of the congregation's pastor, the Rev. A. W. Dick, adopted a more detailed segregation policy and alerted the press to its action. The policy stated that "Many learned and devout Christian men have debated pro and con the question of segregation being scriptural. This is a moot question. It is the current decision of the Session of Second Presbyterian Church that this church will adhere to the policy of segregation in all of its endeavors." As Stephen R. Haynes has noted, it was remarkable that a policy document composed by a group of evangelical Protestants would sidestep the question of scriptural teaching—though in this they followed Mississippi's G. T. Gillespie, who also favored segregation but had been reluctant to invoke an absolute scriptural mandate for his ideas. Chappell observed the contrast between this sort of temporizing and the fervor with which Southern theologians had argued their biblical case for slavery in the 19th century. Indeed, in 1956, the PCUS East Alabama Presbytery had conceded there was "no scriptural basis for racial segregation in the Church," justifying the practice only on traditional and pragmatic grounds. The session of Second Church justified its belief that segregation was necessary, because "one of the leading forces for integration is godless communism, which we believe to be the greatest present-day foe of Christianity."[638]

Some felt that the Church would be the last place where federal judges could impose integration, so that adoption of segregation codes for seating of worshipers represented a sort of "last stand." The Rev. Ben Lacy Rose drew attention to the situation, noting that the Church was rapidly becoming "the last stronghold of segregation on earth." Indeed, as Haynes noted, "As public accommodations and amenities were increasingly desegregated during the first half of the 1960s, churches became the "last bastion of white power and control," the only institutions Blacks had not infiltrated. This was the situation that led the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to speak of 11:00 o'clock on Sunday morning as "America's most segregated hour." (King credited the quote to Liston Pope and his 1958 book, *The Kingdom Beyond Caste*. Ben Lacy Rose had used a similar phrase in 1957, placing it in quotes, indicating that the thought was already commonplace.)[639]

Mississippi Legislature Mandates Church Segregation

With Citizens' Council encouragement, the Mississippi legislature considered bills to prevent integration of churches. In 1956, the state Senate considered a bill to require integrated churches to pay property taxes. (Mississippi churches had long been exempt from property tax, though not from sales tax.) The *Jackson Daily News* warned that the tax bill "should awaken church leaders, regardless of creed or denomination to realization of the grim earnestness of the fight being staged against the Supreme Court decree." Though few, if any, Mississippi pastors were on record at this time for speaking on behalf of integration, the paper said, further, that the bill should remind "certain ministers" that when they "proclaim that the battle against integration in our schools is 'sinful' and 'against the law of God;' [they] array themselves in opposition to the traditional Southern way of life and must take the consequences when so doing." The thrust of the effort seemed to be directed against opinions voiced by

[637] Stephen R. Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 105.

[638] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 106, 107-08, 119; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 117.

[639] Ben Lacy Rose, "Segregation in the Church" (Richmond: Outlook Publishers, 1957): 3.

church leaders outside the state. In the Presbyterian context, the matter once again illustrated the divide existing within the PCUS.[640]

Four years later, the legislature enacted a Church Property Bill that made it possible for two-thirds of adult members of a local congregation to take property out of the control of the denomination through action in the chancery courts. This law denied the right of religious denominations to assert control or ownership of local church property. Supporters of the property bill declared that the legislation was meant to help churches avoid integration—a factor they recognized to be important in maintaining a united front for segregation. *The New York Times* quoted Senator Edgar Lee, one of the bill's sponsors, as saying that when integration came to Mississippi, "it will enter through the front door of churches." Governor Ross Barnett signed the legislation into law on March 31, 1960.[641] Presbyterians opposed the measures, as did the editor of *The Mississippi Baptist Record*, who argued that "the bill sets a dangerous precedent in that it opens the door to state control of the churches." Meanwhile Congressman John Bell Williams solicited information on "liberal ministers," that is, those with anti-segregation views, from the House Committee on Un-American Activities, so as to assist Mississippi's White Citizens' Council in its work.[642]

Exclusionary Seating Confronted as a Moral Issue

In the wake of the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, civil rights activists seized upon the idea of biracial visits to known segregationist churches as a means of spotlighting enforced segregation as a moral issue. *The Christian Century* editorialized that, "bread served at a lunch counter is one thing; bread shared in church is another." Some believed the Church could play a key role in bringing widespread social change. As a student at Southwestern at Memphis told the student newspaper, "Any permanent change in the attitudes of people must . . . come through the Church, for the question of justice or injustice of segregation is a moral question that must be answered first on a moral level."[643]

Beginning in August 1960 and continuing through 1965, dozens of churches across the South were visited by racially mixed groups with varied results. The term "kneel-in" was conceived to describe attempts to break down segregation barriers in white-controlled places of worship. The moral power of such acts, recalling the deeds of the ancient Hebrew prophets sparked worldwide interest, with articles and editorials appearing not only in religious publications such as *The Christian Century* and *The Presbyterian Outlook*, but in much more widely read secular organs as diverse as *The New York Times*, *Life*, and *The National Review*. Such unwanted publicity was devastating for the recalcitrant congregations involved. A review of articles in national and international publications indicates that virtually every prominent American and world religious leader spoke in criticism of Southern segregationist practices and the coincident terrorist violence perpetrated by white defenders of racial subordination. Publicity surrounding church segregation and the harsh treatment accorded some associated with the attempts to visit the white-controlled congregations identified Mississippi as one of the world's most brutal and uncivil regimes in its oppression of African Americans as well as those who sought to liberate them. Religious leaders such as W. A. Visser 't Hooft, a Dutch Reformed minister and Secretary of the World Council of Churches and the Scottish-born bishop and India missionary, author, and ecumenist Lesslie Newbigen spoke out against Southern segregationist policies. Churches of the American South, and especially those of Mississippi, were singled out by ecumenical assemblies, including the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The PCUS General Assembly also called its own synods, presbyteries, and congregations to make changes.[644]

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640 "The Church Tax," *Jackson Daily News* (March 27, 1956): 6; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 26-28; McAtee, *Transformed*, 53.

641 "Mississippi Enacts Church Racial Law," *The New York Times* (April 1, 1960): 33; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 28-33.

642 Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 100-02; *Jackson Daily News* (April 1, 1960); Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 235-36.

643 "Let Us Kneel-In Together," *Christian Century* (August 24, 1960): 963; *The Sou'wester* (April 24, 1964): 3.

644 *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (July 27, 1964): 2; 146 (September 14, 1964): 3.

Reactions across the South were inconsistent. Several Atlanta congregations were visited in August 1960. Interracial groups were welcomed at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Philip, First Presbyterian, Central Presbyterian, Grace Methodist, and St. Mark Methodist. They were denied entrance at the First and Druid Hills Baptist Churches. The visitors were refused welcome at Westminster Presbyterian and First Christian. The PCUS Atlanta Presbytery adopted a resolution in January 1961, stating that there was "no scriptural warrant to exclude from the fellowship of worship those whom the Gospel includes." Some Georgia congregations, however, continued to exclude African Americans while conceding that the scripture did not give warrant for their action.[645]

In Memphis, the first church visits occurred on August 21, 1960. Four African American students were refused welcome at Idlewild Presbyterian. The Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, the congregation's pastor, had been away that week. He addressed the matter the following Sunday, stating that he had been appalled on learning what had happened.

Jones asked, "Whose church is it?" saying, "It is not mine. It is not yours." He declared that, "If it isn't Christ's church, it is not a church at all" and that, "It has never been a question of whom I want and whom I don't want, but whom Christ wants and who will receive his welcome." Thereafter, Idlewild had an open-door policy.[646]

—photo from the *Presbyterian Voice.*

The Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, a son of the First Church in Corinth, served the Presbyterian churches at Lexington, Tchula, and Greenville, Mississippi. As pastor of the influential Idlewild Presbyterian Church in Memphis, he was a powerful force for racial justice in the 1950s and '60s.

Also, in 1960, the First Presbyterian Church of Vicksburg adopted a policy that stated: "The mixing of races at worship services, or attempts to do so, without the consent of all concerned . . . is not to be permitted on our church property." The policy was reaffirmed in 1964 but rescinded in December 1967.[647] On September 14, 1960, in keeping with the action of other sessions across the South, officers of the Holly Springs Church adopted a policy with respect to persons, "who appear at our Church with the apparent intent of attending our services for any reason other than in a true spirit of worship." These were to be turned away. The Rev. Stanford Parnell, the church's pastor, informed his deacons on September 22, 1964, that he could not support the action of the elders in turning away certain people from services. He told the deacons that "(a) such action is unconstitutional; (b) he believed it to be unscriptural; and (c) that he could not imagine Christ standing at the door and forbidding anyone to enter." The deacons did not agree. As events unfolded, the congregation worshiped behind locked doors for several Sundays, with deacons keeping watch at the entrances. Finally, elder Norman B. McKenzie, superintendent

645 Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 21-23, 255.

646 Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 26-27, 55; *Memphis Press-Scimitar* (September 6, 1960): 6.

647 Cunny, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Vicksburg*, 7-8.

of the Holly Springs Schools and a respected leader in the congregation and community, asked Parnell's permission to address the congregation. McKenzie said that he felt that it was cowardly and wrong for the church to worship behind locked doors. He urged the deacons to unlock the doors and come upstairs to join the worshiping congregation. By account of those present, his appeal carried the day, and the matter of turning away Black worshipers was never raised again.[648]

On Easter Day in 1963, several dramatic church visits were attempted in Birmingham. African Americans were welcomed at the First Baptist but denied seats at Sixth Avenue Presbyterian. The Rev. Edward Ramage, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church since 1946, welcomed his visitors but was accused of communist sympathies and received death threats. These incidents occurred while the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed in the city and occasioned his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail." In his letter, King chastised white Christians for their failure to join the struggle for Black equality. He said:

> In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, 'These are social issues with which the gospel has no real concern.'

King echoed Edmund Burke's famous dictum that "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Yet, as Dupont noted, "Not only did [most] white Christians fail to fight for black equality they often labored mightily against it."[649]

Meanwhile, in the 1964 presidential election, Mississippi's still mostly white electorate gave their votes to Barry Goldwater, an Arizona Republican well-known for his vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It was the first time in the 20th century that the state's voters had supported a Republican presidential candidate. This political change underscored the cultural hegemony that underlay much of Mississippi's life, including its major religious bodies. Sociologists noted the high allegiance of the South's populations to one party or the other, with the divide generally falling along racial lines. The remarkable transition from Democratic to Republican allegiance among white Mississippians occurred in the reverse among African Americans, causing some to question the South's commitment to democracy, or at least the normal operation of the two-party system seen elsewhere in America. Indeed, after 1980, most white Mississippians gave their votes to Republican candidates. Such homogeneity also may have discouraged healthy debate in the churches.

[648] Minutes of the Board of Deacons, First Presbyterian Church, Holly Springs (September 22, 1964); Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Rock*, 465-66.

[649] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 5. See Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Eight White Religious Leaders and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

Mississippians Wrote for Presbyterian Journal to Support Segregation

Conservative Presbyterians in Mississippi looked to *The Presbyterian Journal*, published in Weaverville, North Carolina, as their chief source of information for church news and opinion. In September 1958, *Presbyterian Journal* editor Henry B. Dendy condemned Northern churches' "lack of sympathy" for Southern segregationists. He wrote that this integrationist attitude, if unchecked, could harm the cause of Christ. By the account of Kenneth Taylor, a professor of history at Georgia's Piedmont College, pro-segregation articles echoed in the pages of *The Journal* from the 1940s to the 1960s. According to this point of view at that time and place, the social and racial order of the South was divinely sanctioned and biblically supported; anyone who disagreed was mistaken. As late as June 22, 1966, the paper published an article entitled, "When 'Concern' is Taken Too Far," in connection with calls to admit children of all races to denominational children's homes, the paper editorialized that "Christ said that His followers were to look upon all men as brothers. He did not say they were to look upon them as potential husbands and wives." The article stated that liberal "obsession" with racial equality was a "cover up for bankrupt theology and empty Christian conviction." The interpretation *Journalers* favored conveniently supported the dominant group's interests and personal agendas. *The Journal* also printed social justifications for segre-gation. These were that segregation maintained the peace and that it was kind, American, and practical. Furthermore, *The Journal* argued that civil disobedience was dangerous—a threat to law and order and an encouragement to communists who sought to overthrow the government and more laws would not foster racial justice. Authors seldom quoted Bible verses while making these secondary theological arguments.

Mississippians and authors with Mississippi connections were prominent in promoting such ideas. In 1950, *The Journal* published an article by former Belhaven College president, the Rev. W. H. Frazer, which offered medical and cultural reasons for the kindness of segregation. According to these social Darwinian arguments, the dire consequences of racial intermarriage included "weakening the resistance to certain diseases by hybrid offspring" and the reversal of American cultural progress by creating "a culture of the lowest common denominator." During the 1960s, the Rev. A. H. Freundt Jr. of Forest, who had written for the White Citizens' Council newspaper, prepared Sunday school lessons for *The Presbyterian Journal* that could be used to supplement, or in substitution for the denominational curricula that was judged to be more liberal in tone. (*The Presbyterian Outlook*, of course, supplied lessons, most written by the Rev. E. T. Thompson, which emphasized its perspective.).[650]

Change was to come, however. The Rev. Billy Graham, son-in-law of longtime *Journal* editor L. Nelson Bell, may have influenced a certain diminishing of racist sentiment at the paper, for on November 23, 1966, *The Journal* printed the full text of a statement by the World Congress of Evangelism, a gathering of evangelical leaders from 100 nations, brought together by the Graham organization. As published in *The Journal*, the document, titled, "One Race, One Gospel, One Task," stated, in part, that "We recognize the failures of many of us in the recent past to speak with sufficient clarity and force upon the Biblical unity of the human race." The statement then declared that everyone needs divine forgiveness and salvation and declared, "We reject the notion that men are unequal because of the distinction of race and color. In the name of Scripture and of Jesus Christ we condemn racialism wherever it appears." It then pled for forgiveness and for grace to resist racism.[651]

Graham and his fellow evangelicals had called out Christians who rejected the social gospel, stating in effect, that their silence in the face of discrimination constituted a social gospel of a different sort. It took time for *The Journal* to change its position. After 1966, *The Journal* ceased to make theological arguments in support of segregation, but it continued to criticize the civil rights movement and allied religious efforts for social reform. While publishing no more articles outlining biblical justifications for segregation, the paper did, from 1966 to 1969, make incidental references to civil rights, always placing the words in quotation marks, as if to imply that its advocates con-stituted a pseudo-civil rights movement. The modification in editorial policy weakened religious support for segregation at just the moment it was most needed by white supremacists, as in 1967, when

[650] William H. Frazer, "The Social Separation of the Races," *Presbyterian Journal* 9 (July 15, 1950): 7.

[651] *Presbyterian Journal* 17 (September 24, 1958): 2-3.

the federal courts ordered the complete desegregation of all public schools. In particular, *The Journal* opposed the civil disobedience activities and demonstrations led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others, also opposing the PCUS Assembly's 1966 approval of civil disobedience to resist unjust laws. The Rev. G. Aiken Taylor, a subsequent editor of *The Journal*, also worked to undermine civil rights progress, corresponding with the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission as it searched for materials that might challenge the religious legitimacy of African American Mississippians connected to civil rights activity.[652]

By contrast, *The Presbyterian Survey* had a different tone. In spite of much criticism, the official PCUS magazine published articles about racial and economic injustice, the effects of segregation on African Americans, and the efforts of Southern Presbyterians to alleviate these problems. Conservatives were critical of such articles, although the magazine's positions were in line with General Assembly statements. The magazine's operation was overseen by a select committee of church leaders appointed by the Assembly. *The Journal's* operation was supervised by an independent board that was not chosen by or responsible to elected representatives of any church body.[653]

In the late 1960s, *Journal* articles asserted that the liberal emphasis on racial equality was a cynical substitute for loss of spiritual conviction and evangelistic fervor. Co-editor L. Nelson Bell believed the most damning argument against integration was that theological liberals espoused it, though in something of a tautology, support for civil rights was taken to be a clear indication of theological liberalism.

Following Dr. King's assassination, *The Survey* devoted its June 1968 issue to King, publishing tributes as well as articles about the Memphis sanitation workers' strike. The issue also reprinted King's 1963 "Letter from the Birmingham Jail." Some reacted in anger, canceling their subscriptions. For this and many reasons, *Survey* subscriptions fell from 252,000 in 1966 to 234,000 after the controversies of 1968. By 1970, the rate had fallen to 149,083. For its part, *The Journal* remarked that, "Martin Luther King was not a man whom we admired," and termed him "a subversive." It deplored both his death and his civil disobedience, declaring that "until law and order prevail, social justice will never be perfected." Bell wrote in 1969 that the Southern Presbyterian Church had failed Blacks by preaching social justice, not redemption.[654]

Out-of-State Seminary Graduates Faced Difficulties in Mississippi

PCUS congregations in Mississippi looked to seminaries located far from the state as a source for new ministers. Decatur, Georgia, home of Columbia Seminary, was 488 miles east of Jackson. Austin Seminary was 541 miles west. Louisville Seminary was 586 miles north. The farthest was Union at Richmond, Virginia—some 916 miles from Jackson. A constant complaint was that young graduates from the PCUS seminaries did not understand Mississippi, or the particular social issues that required such delicate treatment in the state. Even young men from the state who traveled to these institutions returned to Mississippi changed by the experience in ways their elders found "unhelpful." In the years 1956-1967, an unusually large contingent of Union Seminary graduates found their way to Mississippi to serve their initial or second calls as pastors. As the Rev. Robert W. Tabscott remembered, "Some 50 of us graduated from UTS in the spring of 1962. We were on our way, but little did we know what lay ahead for the nation and for us. I do not understand how it was that so many of us showed up in Dixie . . . but we did: Mac Hart, Larry Kennon, Denton McLellan, Ed Wilson, Bill Jones, Bob Lawrence, Bert Tuggle, and I were among them. Most of us were Union men. God, we were young and green, heavy laden and afraid, hardly prepared to face what we had to face . . . states' rights, racism, and rage, and one of the most sorrowful battlegrounds was the church in which I had been raised." Hart was ordained to serve at Fayette and Union Church, and was later called to Trinity Church, Meridian; Kennon followed Hart at Meridian's Trinity Church. McLellan served Trinity Church in Laurel, Wilson served the First Church in Corinth, and then succeeded

[652] *Presbyterian Journal* 26 (April 17, 1968): 12; 25 (June 22, 1966): 14; (June 5, 1957): 2.

[653] Overbeck, "The Rise and Fall of Presbyterian Official Journals," 100-101.

[654] *Presbyterian Journal* 28 (June 11, 1969): 13; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 217.

the Rev. J. Moody McDill at Jackson's Fondren Church. Lawrence preceded Hart in Meridian, and then was pastor of Covenant Church in Jackson. Tabscott served Jackson's Covenant Church following Lawrence. Tuggle was an associate pastor in the Tupelo Church and then was pastor at Leland. William H. Jones and Denton McLellan were Mississippi natives. Jones, who served Jackson's Faith Church, was African American, and received his education at Stillman College and Johnson C. Smith Seminary—both historically Black PCUS entities.[655]

The atmosphere in the PCUS seminaries was definitely not sympathetic to Mississippi's segregationist conservatives. Events at Union were typical. By the autumn of 1964, PCUS seminaries such as Union in Richmond were offering courses such as "Ethical Issues in the American South" and "Religion in the Changing South." Union Seminary historian William B. Sweetser Jr. wrote that, "The issue of race and civil rights was ever present for this generation of students. They had grown up in segregation and were struggling with how to end it." Some took part in demonstrations, and articles in the Union Seminary student newspaper alleged "the failure of the church." One said that "If a person takes the Christian faith with honesty," he will "toss aside conventional Christian thinking." Professor Ben Lacy Rose observed that, "When Jesus was on earth in the flesh, he did not hesitate to disregard the social customs of his day which required segregation."

James O. Chatham Served at Fayette and Union Church in Summer of 1964

In his memoir *Sundays Down South*, the Rev. James O. Chatham, a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, who had come to Fayette and Union Church in the summer of 1964 as a new graduate from Union Seminary in Virginia recorded a memoir of his Mississippi pastorates. Chatham and his wife, Nancy, had been married in Louisville, Kentucky, on June 21—the same day as civil rights workers Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney were murdered near Philadelphia, Mississippi, 160 miles from Fayette. One of the first sights they had seen on driving into the state was a military convoy headed toward Philadelphia. Chatham wryly recalled seeing a trash can full of discarded magazines in the Fayette Post Office.

> The container was jammed, and a stack was building on the floor. 'Whatever magazine it is, it must be really unpopular here,' I thought to myself. Picking one up, I saw that it was *The Presbyterian Survey*, published monthly by my denomination and sent free to every Presbyterian family. *The Survey*, amid its articles on theology and church events, was openly supporting civil rights. . . . I realized that my church members, the ones I would be preaching to and visiting, were voicing their total disdain by creating this stack.[656]

As with many who held their PCUS seminary education in a positive light, Chatham thus discovered how difficult it would be in Mississippi to represent his Church and its teaching in a positive light. Union Seminary fasted on November 15, 1964, "in support of impoverished Negroes in Mississippi." Students were uniformly in favor of merging with the UPUSA. In 1965, the student body passed a resolution urging the PCUS to remain in the National Council of Churches.[657] It was clear that young ministers holding such views would face difficulties in the Magnolia State. Yet, with pastoral concern and carefully worded sermons, many carried out effective ministries. A few were forced from their pulpits; others left in despair.

Conservative Mississippians placed great emphasis upon uniformity in thought and belief. As Dupont observed, "The fundamentalist approach to the Bible relied on a thick consensus about its meanings. . . . To preserve this consensus about the Bible's meanings, Mississippians studied the Bible corporately. They expounded the meaning of scripture in worship services structured around the sermon, in large and well-attended Sunday

[655] Robert W. Tabscott, "A Moral Reckoning," unpublished tribute to Professor John Bright, cited in Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 343.

[656] James O. Chatham, *Sundays Down South: A Pastor's Stories* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi (1999): 31, 38.

[657] Chatham, *Sundays Down South*, 359, 360, 362.

schools, and through religious literature—practices that cut against their claim that each believer could ascertain the meaning for him-or herself in private." Liberal Christians were viewed as dangerous. Indeed, "the believer who would compromise biblical truths posed a far greater threat than the outright atheist or rank sinner." Candidates for ordination in the PCUS presbyteries of Mississippi often faced rigorous and protracted examinations designed to vet their commitments to conservative theological positions.[658]

Conservatives instinctively resisted change. Samuel S. Hill Jr. wrote that many Southerners viewed the Church as an "institution which can be changed only at the expense of its integrity and supernatural reason for existence. According to this view, changelessness must be a basal feature of its policy." Dupont added that "In demanding a consensus about the meaning of the Bible, fundamentalism disqualified all other interpretations of Christianity, especially those versions of the faith that claimed a Gospel mandate for social change. Thus, segregation had a faith that would declare apostate and illegitimate any reading of the scripture that did not reflect its own favored but narrow emphasis on individual salvation and personal evangelism. What often looked like bigotry was actually desperate message control."[659] Change would spell the end of the Church and the way of life it represented. Hill spoke of the peculiar relation that exists between the Southern church and its surrounding culture. "Tersely stated, it has been a long and happy union. The southern church is comfortable in its homeland, and the culture sits comfortably with its church." Dupont summed matters in this way: "As a corporate enterprise, segregation would encounter no challenge from Mississippi's evangelicals, who remained deeply committed to their kind of Christianity and highly scornful of other versions of the faith."[660]

Some Mississippi Presbyterians Supported Racial Change

Individual Mississippi pastors and church members opposed segregated seating resolutions in their churches as well as other efforts to perpetuate segregation, some pointing out that to institute such rules in churches was to enact a prohibition where none had existed before. But as well-known PCUS ministers in other states spoke for compliance with laws and court orders requiring desegregation, many Mississippi Presbyterians became defensive, believing that they were victims of "outside interference."

Advocates of change within the state found themselves hard-pressed to speak if they could not claim local birth and upbringing. Starkville's Robert H. Walkup once prefaced a sermon on admitting Blacks to worship with a reminder that he was no outsider—he had been born and reared in Mississippi. Walkup's father, the Rev. R. L. Walkup, had been a Presbyterian minister, active in home missions work in the southern part of the state. He had gone on to become the first PCUS Secretary for Stewardship, with offices in Montreat. The elder Walkup died when young Bob was three, followed in death by his wife, the former Margaret Caldwell, soon after. Margaret Caldwell was a granddaughter of one of the state's pioneer Presbyterian ministers, the Rev. Andrew Harper Caldwell, who had come to Mississippi in covered wagons with a company of settlers in 1847. This immigration gave rise to one of the most important Presbyterian families in the state. Robert Walkup and his twin brother had gone to live with their grandparents in Senatobia, who saw to the boys' education and provided a home and encouragement for them. His right to speak as a Mississippian was impossible to challenge, but his views favoring integration were nonetheless strongly opposed by some in his Starkville congregation.[661]

[658] Chatham, *Sundays Down South*, 24-25.

[659] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 28-29; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 37.

[660] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 30; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 37.

[661] Frank A. Brooks Jr., "Family Connections," in Jane Hines, ed., *The Bob Walkup Storybook* (Nashville, Hart Street Press, 1995): 98-100.

Church Seating in Summit, Mississippi

In Summit, Mississippi, said to have received its name because it was the highest point on the Illinois Central Railroad between New Orleans and Jackson (an elevation of 420 feet), the Rev. John Leighton Stuart Jr. often officiated at interment services for Jewish persons who had once lived in the small town and had moved away, there no longer being a rabbi resident in the community. Stuart was the son of longtime China missionary and ambassador, J. Leighton Stuart. Stuart's stepson Curtis Wilkie recorded memories of growing up in the small town—some humorous, others having serious implications. He wrote that in the 1960s, "Despite their Calvinist training, the elders of the Summit Church did not practice piety. Quite often they took a break between Sunday school and the 11 a.m. church service to have a beer at Ben Dickerson's Texaco station around the corner"—this, presumably to prove they were "not Baptist." On July 12, 1964, when some elders felt they should establish a segregation policy in the event the small church should be targeted by integrationists, the congregation voted to seat any visitor, regardless of color, who came to worship. "But where will they sit?" asked one unhappy parishioner. Mrs. Lyda Stuart, the pastor's wife, rose from her pew. "They can sit with me," she said.[662]

Incidents at Mississippi Presbyterian Churches

Ever-growing complaints from overseas missionaries complicated the position of Southern segregationists. Presbyterians were in a position similar to that of the State Department during the 1950s and '60s. Whereas the United States was trying to secure the allegiance of newly independent former colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia, the Church was seeking to win converts in these areas. Both the U. S. government and the churches were well aware of similar efforts by communists. Press reports of racial discrimination and violence in the United States frustrated the efforts of both governmental and religious representatives overseas. As Chappell wrote, "For the southern churches, a missionary motive was as powerful as the Cold War motive that is so often cited by scholars who are at pains to explain why the U. S. government turned against segregation" in the late 1940s and early 1950s.[663]

The Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations did not wish to alienate the newly independent countries, nor did the PCUS wish to embarrass its mission work in Asia and Africa. Thus, in 1960, the Synod of Virginia noted that "Much has been said of our race tension as providing propaganda for communism in its appeal to the uncommitted nations of the world. What is of greater concern to us as Christians is the effect in our mission fields in our appeal to those uncommitted to Christ. . . . We must learn . . . that our domestic problems [affect] our whole Christian appeal to a largely colored world."[664]

William Graeber McAtee tells of an occasion in the early 1960s when Sydney Shaw, later an elder in the Oxford Church, then a student at the University of Mississippi, assisted his father, Parham Rufus Shaw, an elder in the College Hill Presbyterian Church, in finding guest ministers to conduct services at College Hill. The younger Shaw invited University of Mississippi chaplain Will Campbell to preach. Another member of the church who was a high-ranking member of the university administration confronted P. R. Shaw, calling for Campbell to be disinvited because he had famously played ping-pong in public with an African American student on the university campus. Sydney Shaw recalled years later that his father responded to the demand by saying, "I believe we need to hear this chaplain," and so the congregation did.

[662] Curtis Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey Through Events That Shaped the Modern South* (New York: Scribner's, 2001): 65, 54, 141.

[663] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[664] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 147-48.

Campbell, who described himself as a "bootleg preacher" of Baptist persuasion, formed enduring friendships with many of the state's Presbyterians. A native of rural Amite County, he had gone to war, then to Yale, prior to his ministry in Mississippi. Just as the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann had warned the Church against "uncritical assimilation" with society's social programs, Campbell cautioned against a Church that simply rode the coattails of the Supreme Court, "imitating the action of the state . . . confirming such action with a pious benediction." He thought it would have been better for the Church to have spoken more forcefully about race prior to 1954. In that case, Campbell said, the Church would have been required to say, "Thus saith the Lord! Not, thus saith the law!" Soon after leaving the University of Mississippi to serve the National Council of Churches as its Southern staff representative, Campbell penned an influential book urging the churches to reclaim their prophetic role in society. His book, *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (1962), was published by Westminster Press, the UPUSA publishing house in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[665]

William Graeber McAtee, whose father was pastor of the Brookhaven Church, then a student in Southwestern at Memphis—was himself chastised by the same College Hill member, where he had preached as student minister in 1956 and made an approving reference to the *Brown* decision of the Supreme Court. McAtee had preached on the theme, "Living Monuments," noting how difficult it was to be a Christian in those complex times because it was hard to keep the commandment that Jesus gave us, to believe in his name and love one another. He spoke of the critical times the nation might face due to nuclear armaments and the Communist threat. He also spoke about the difficulty of being living Christian monuments in the face of "the situation we are facing here in the South," saying, "I fear to think of the things that could happen to us if we continue to go in the direction we are headed," and that, "Ultimately the victory is not going to be won in the courtroom or by mob rule. These problems are not going to be solved by angry groups of Citizens' Councils or NAACP. . . . The spirit of love is going to have to replace the spirit of hate. The spirit of Christ will have to rule in the hearts of men."[666]

McAtee wrote that,

> When I walked out the door to greet the worshipers, I quickly found out how true that last statement was. I was met by a high-ranking administrator from Ole Miss, who was livid and breathing fire all over me for my remarks about the lack of efficacy of the Citizens' Council in solving the problems of the day. He was a Delta planter whose home was not too far from where the Citizens' Council had been founded in Indianola. I later found out that he had been a political appointee of Governor Bilbo in the aftermath of the governor's failed purge of the university in an attempt to move it from Oxford to Jackson in 1936. I may have been a bit naïve and uninformed about the role of the Citizens' Councils and the NAACP in the current turmoil, but I was absolutely convinced about God being the ultimate judge of right and wrong. This was my welcome to the world of emerging realities in our church and society and the price exacted by those realities when challenged.[667]

In 1958, the Central Mississippi Presbytery, complained that "Since the General Assembly took its original action on the question in 1954, there has been a growing tendency to pressure the Church to accept the integration of the races." The presbytery again asked the PCUS Assembly to abolish its Council on Christian Relations because the council opposed segregation. The Assembly answered the Mississippi overture in the negative, and two years later, youth conferences at Montreat were fully desegregated, after which conservatives, alleging theological declension at Montreat, organized alternative youth events.

Native-born Mississippi ministers, as well as those from other locales, often felt no choice but to leave the state.

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[665] Will D. Campbell, *Soul Among Lions: Musings of a Bootleg Preacher* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999); Jürgen Moltmann*, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974): 19; Will D. Campbell, *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962): 4.

[666] McAtee, *Dreams*, 317-18; McAtee, *Transformed*, 44.

[667] McAtee, *Transformed*, 44.

When civil rights workers came to Canton in 1963, the Presbyterian Church was the only white congregation to welcome them to worship. Citizens' Council leaders viewed the Canton Church's policy as a serious breach in the wall of white solidarity. Activists who visited the church suffered for their audacity—During a Sunday service, someone poured sugar into the oil reservoir of their car. When a liberal-minded parishioner invited them to Sunday dinner, pressure from Citizens' Council leaders compelled her to renege.

Several parishioners with Citizens' Council ties called on their pastor, the Rev. Richard T. Harbison, a son of Greenville's First Presbyterian Church, to insist that the Presbyterians join the other congregations in spurning the civil rights workers efforts to worship with them. A graduate of Washington and Lee University, Union Seminary in Richmond, with graduate study at St. Andrew's University in Scotland, Harbison had the benefit of exposure to a wider world that many of his church members did not have. The leader of the group told Harbison that, that, "to us the community and the church are one and the same. And what goes for the community has got to go for the church."

The Citizens' Council leaders spoke with session members, and the next day, Presbyterian ushers turned the civil rights workers away from the Sunday service. One of the persons who had visited the Harbisons at the manse handed out copies of a resolution that recommended that the church deny access to "all persons, without distinction of race or color, actively associated or affiliated with so-called civil-rights groups currently operating in Mississippi." (The visitors were a racially mixed group.) The session, meeting before worship, defeated the proposal by a vote of six to three. But since the three workers had been rejected that day, Harbison did not conduct the service. The next week, in Harbison's absence, segregationist members again brought the resolution to bar the civil rights workers before the session, and on this occasion, the resolution was passed unanimously. The visitors appeared at the church the next Sunday and were again turned away. This time, Harbison draped his preaching gown across a chair in his study and pinned a letter of resignation to it. He then accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Kentucky.[668]

The pastor of First Baptist Church in Belzoni was similarly forced to resign after serving there for 21 years. During this period, a few Baptists, upset at their congregations' refusal to adopt inclusive seating policies, either changed churches (often becoming Episcopal) or gave up churchgoing altogether.[669]

That summer, in the aftermath of the murders of Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney, the Rev. Sam B. Laine, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at nearby Louisville, penned a letter to *The Jackson Daily News*, urging that if the states had attended to their civil rights obligations, there would have been no need for others (that is, the federal authorities) to intervene. A cross was burned in his yard, and several elders began a movement to have him removed as pastor. Comments were made to Laine's wife, Becky, that she should be careful for her children's safety. With the assistance of David L. Stitt, president of Austin Seminary, Laine and his family moved to a church in Magnolia, Arkansas.[670]

Near this time, the Rev. J. Julius Scott, a professor at Belhaven College, was preaching at one of the churches in the northeast part of Central Mississippi Presbytery. Scott, who held degrees from Columbia Seminary and the University of Manchester in England, was preaching a series of sermons on Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." He drew parallels between early Christian and present-day situations, and the sermons were not well received. Scott's wife, Florence, who remained at home on Sunday mornings with their two young daughters, received a threatening phone call, intimating that if her husband continued to preach as he had been doing, she would not see him alive again. Scott soon took a position at Western Kentucky State University.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Jamison A. Jones, dean of Southwestern, was invited to preach in one of St. Andrew

[668] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 183-85; McAtee, *Transformed*, 83-84.

[669] Ben Lacy Rose, *Racial Segregation in the Church* (Richmond, Va.: Outlook Publishers, 1957); Rachel Henderlite, "The Christian Way in Race Relations," *Theology Today* 14 (1957): 196-99; Jane Hines, ed., *The Bob Walkup Story Book* (Nashville: Hart Street Press, 1995): 11; Dwyn M. Mounger to R. Milton Winter, April 12, 1999; *Baptist Press* (October 28, 1964).

[670] Sam B. Laine to R. Milton Winter, October 7, 2014.

Presbytery's congregations near Memphis. According to Julia Allen, as Dr. Jones was putting on his gown in the robing room, a church deacon stepped in to inform him that "If Negroes sought to enter the church during the service, he was to end the service and dismiss the congregation immediately." Jones said that he was not willing to conduct a service under such restrictions, and as the deacon indicated that he and his fellow deacons were not willing to have him serve under any other agreement, Jones returned to Memphis without having conducted the service.[671]

Serious Controversies Arise in Central Mississippi Presbytery

Beginning in the late 1950s, the Synod of Mississippi was the scene of intense and protracted controversies concerning both religious doctrine and ecclesiastical procedure. Events centered around, but were not confined to, personalities and actions in the Central Mississippi Presbytery. This situation contributed to a perception that the Synod of Mississippi and especially its Presbytery of Central Mississippi was the most conservative in the PCUS. In 1966, the General Assembly sustained the complaint of the minority in the Synod of Mississippi who objected to the Central Mississippi Presbytery's procedures. The Assembly appointed a pastoral commission to investigate the causes for unrest in the synod and to visit the synod and its constituent presbyteries to foster reconciliation where possible. The controversies first became manifest as members of the presbytery arrived at increasingly divergent conclusions as to the theological acceptability of young ministers being examined for ordination. In each case, these were graduates in good standing from the official PCUS theological seminaries.[672]

In some parts of the PCUS, presbytery examinations for the ordination or reception of ministers could be highly controversial occasions, with the candidates being questioned serving as foils for rehearsals of long-standing disagreements over theological and social issues that existed among the members of the body. For example, commissioners would be interested to know the candidate's position on social issues of the day—and whether the candidate believed the Church should speak to them either in preaching or through direct action. Some saw the Church's involvement in social questions as an earnest effort to apply scriptural teaching to present-day problems—problems they felt the Church had long failed to address. Others saw these things as a dangerous attempt to involve the Church in secular issues. Most conservatives also believed such efforts to be misguided and wrong, deriving from a weak and defective understanding of scripture's authority and purpose.

Partisans on both sides claimed that their viewpoints represented the will of God as revealed in scripture. In this period, proponents of controversial theological and social views generally espoused what was termed a "Neo-Orthodox" understanding of biblical infallibility—a view that conservative Presbyterians believed to be incompatible with the Church's constitution. Conservatives, for their part, also wished to uphold their understanding of the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church. A report in *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 17, 1957, illustrated the situation. It reported that a Mississippi candidate for ordination had been quizzed as follows:

1. Do you believe in the integration of the black and white races? Do you advocate the integration of the black and white races?
2. Do you advocate the early reunion of the U.S.A. and the U. S. Presbyterian Churches?
3. Are you Neo-Orthodox in interpretation of the Scriptures? Miracles?
4. Do you accept: the Virgin birth of Christ? Substitutionary atonement? Resurrection of Christ?
5. Do you believe in salvation through Christ alone?[673]

[671] Julia Allen to Milton Winter, February 12, 2022.

[672] "Synod Actions: Mississippi," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (June 27, 1966): 4; "Synod of Mississippi Visitation," (May 29, 1967): 7-8.

[673] *Presbyterian Outlook* (June 17, 1957): 6.

This partisanship, which took advantage of parts of *The Book of Church Order* that were framed to provide ordaining bodies with broad discretion, was used by the Presbytery of Central Mississippi to enforce conservative positions, and revealed the great divergence that had arisen through the years between the presbytery and the wider Church over concepts of the Bible's authority, as well as its interpretation, and in particular, over the proper ways for Presbyterians to address difficult societal issues involving racial integration, as well as the advisability of ecumenical relationships and union between the various Presbyterian denominations and other religious bodies. Because conservatives believed their orthodoxies were under attack, a greater and greater defensiveness emerged, and more liberal Presbyterians, sensing this, were emboldened to offer controversial opinions in the sessions of presbytery. Such collisions of ideology and theology both reflected and shaped events in the secular sphere as white Mississippians confronted the civil rights movement and other expressions of social change. The events in Mississippi were, in many ways, a paradigm for the issues roiling the entire PCUS. All recognized that it was in Mississippi that the struggle was most intense, and conservatives believed these matters were the prelude to an inevitable division of the Church.[674] Ominously, the fact that questions concerning race and integration headed the list of controversial subjects gave a clue as to where the root cause of the dissention lay. At the very least, the matters of segregation and other issues in academic studies of Bible and theology had become closely bound together.

Many older ministers were concerned that seminary students no longer studied the theological texts under which they were schooled. Most PCUS seminaries had used theology texts written in the years following the Civil War or in the early 20th century. These were orthodox by every measure, and little, if any, of the movement known as Protestant Liberalism had found its way into the Southern Church. But in the years during and after World War II, a theological movement broadly known as Neo-Orthodoxy found favor among many PCUS theologians and ministers. Neo-Orthodoxy had arisen after World War I among theologians in Europe and America as a corrective to perceived defects in the older liberal movements, particularly ideas of human nature and the inevitability of progress that the dreadful war had revealed to be overly optimistic.

The Neo-Orthodox theologians rejected all forms of utopianism and insisted on the importance of traditional Christian concepts such as human sinfulness and divine judgment. They insisted upon the need for forgiveness as a condition for all human existence. Among the principal theologians of the movement were the European scholars Barth, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, and Joachim Jeremias and the American brothers Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr. Each in different ways sought to teach Christian doctrine and conduct biblical research with loyalty to the teachings of historic Christianity and the Protestant Reformation, but they also sought to take seriously the questions posed by the Enlightenment philosophers (making use of Enlightenment methodology, while questioning some of its dogmas), as well as the discoveries of modern science.

As one 20th century PCUS scholar, the Rev. John H. Leith—a professor in Union Theological Seminary at Richmond, Virginia—explained, "It is clear that theology after the Enlightenment will never be the same again. The dogmas of the Enlightenment were in many instances the denial of Christian faith, as for example the notion that scientific knowledge exhausted truth. The spirit of the Enlightenment, however, contributes to the strength of any theology. The insistence on freedom of inquiry is in the long run essential to good theology as well as to the integrity of the human mind. After the Enlightenment we know better than we have known before that we cannot believe what we know is not true, that any religion which requires the sacrifice of the integrity of the human mind is bad religion. Theology after the Enlightenment must come to terms with freedom of inquiry, with respect for the facts, with the insistence on the integrity of the human mind in theological work, [and] with the relevance of the Christian faith for concrete human experience."[675]

The Enlightenment's stress on the use of reason to analyze reality—its questions as to whether direct knowledge of the spiritual world was possible for humans, its belief that all creation was governed by laws

[674] See George M. Marsden, *The Twilight of the American Enlightenment: The 1950s and the Crisis of Liberal Belief* (Basic Books, 2014).

[675] See John H, Leith, *The Reformed Imperative: What the Church Has to Say That No One Else Can Say* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988): 36.

that could be explained by science, thus discounting the possibility of supernatural intervention in nature, and its doubt that human events could be the disclosure of divine reality—were all matters that the Neo-Orthodox thinkers sought both to understand, take seriously, and address in the light of their belief in God and the divine revelation they saw in Jesus Christ. To neglect or deny these questions, all of which had come into sharp focus since the Reformation, was to ignore the realities posed by life in the modern world. All Neo-Orthodox thinkers embraced the latest historical research into the origins of the Bible and sought to apply scriptural teaching to the social problems of the day. Their opinions and conclusions were varied. Most believed that human efforts at theology were provisional—that the finiteness and sinfulness of mankind made final or comprehensive statements impossible, so that modesty and humility in theological reasoning was necessary, though they were passionate in their proclamation of the gospel as the one truth that stood above all other truths. They put great emphasis on stating or restating historic truth (as well as fresh insights) in the contemporary idiom. Neo-Orthodox thought was mediated to Mississippi Presbyterians through the pages of *The Presbyterian Outlook*, as well as by seminary professors such as Leith at Union Seminary, the Revs. Felix B. Gear and Shirley C. Guthrie at Columbia Seminary, and by Frank H. Caldwell and Albert C. Winn at the Presbyterian Seminary in Louisville.

A second development was the reintroduction of Calvin's theology as mediated through his magisterial two-volume *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which, strangely enough, had never been required reading in some PCUS seminaries prior to the 1940s. As E. T. Thompson remembered his classes in theology at Union Seminary in 1915-1920, the Rev. Thomas Cary Johnson "taught Dr. [Robert L.] Dabney's theology—just drilled it in us. He did not invite questions, did not teach us anything about any theological developments after the *Westminster Confession* and the scholastic theologians, [and] . . . just sort of said, 'My task is to teach you one theology, the right one.'" Dabney's theology, of course, had served to perpetuate and reinforce the doctrine of the Church's spirituality as put forth by James Henley Thornwell, isolating the Church from all secular questions.[676]

It quickly became obvious to students that Calvin's own theology was quite different in some respects from the theology of thinkers in subsequent eras who had sought to further systematize and mediate his work: scholars such as James Henley Thornwell or Robert L. Dabney, as well as others whose writings had been used as theological texts in the PCUS seminaries up to that time. A chief difference, as it appeared to younger PCUS students, was the emphasis that Calvin put on the Church's responsibility to act, when necessary, to bring the Word of God to bear on matters affecting the social order. This also became evident as fresh studies of the Scottish Reformation and Puritanism were brought forward in this period.[677]

Perhaps because the older liberalism had never penetrated Southern religious thought, what was intended as a "new orthodoxy" was seen by many a departure *from* orthodoxy! This perception was reinforced by the fact that many of Neo-Orthodoxy's adherents, especially younger ministers graduating from the PCUS seminaries, also supported racial integration and the ecumenical movement. Because of its relative isolation from the currents that were roiling the theologians and churchgoers of Europe and the academic communities of larger universities, many white Presbyterians in Mississippi felt that Neo-Orthodoxy was attempting to answer questions that they had not asked and calling for changes in areas of life where they wished to follow old paths. The implications of these differences in understanding were of crucial importance for understanding events that unfolded among

[676] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 282.

[677] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:207-15, 470; Ernest Trice Thompson, *et. al*., *The Days of Our Years, 1812-1962: Historical Convocations Held at the Sesquicentennial Celebrations of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia* (Richmond: published by the Seminary, 1962): 66-67, 70, 78. Cf. Holmes Rolston, III, *John Calvin vs. the Westminster Confession* (Richmond: John Knox, 1972); John H. Leith, "John Calvin and Social Responsibility," *Associate Reformed Presbyterian* 84 (August 30, 1948): 7-9; George L. Hunt, ed., *Calvinism and the Political Order* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965); Robert M. Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva," *The American Historical Review* 76 (February 1971): 50-60; Ronald H. Stone, ed., *Reformed Faith and Politics: Essays Prepared for the Advisory Council on Church and Society of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the Council on Theology and Culture of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S.* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983).

Mississippi Presbyterians in this period and in succeeding decades.[678] To check the growth of unorthodox views within their bounds, PCUS ministers after 1924 promised at ordination "that you will upon your own initiative make known to the presbytery any change in your views since the assumption of this vow."

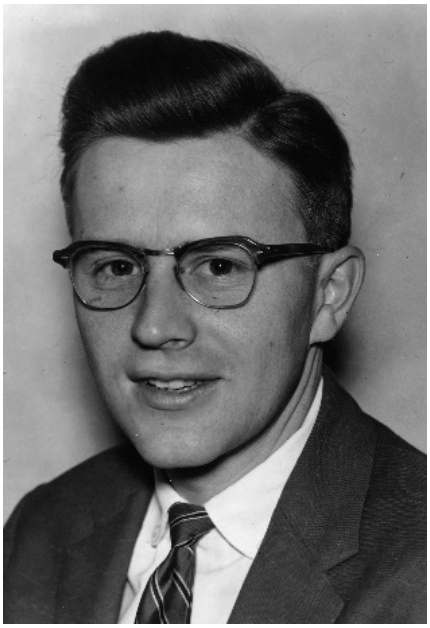
Central Mississippi Presbytery Declines to Receive the Rev. A. M. Hart

Theological disagreements in the Presbytery of Central Mississippi reached a crisis April 19, 1962, when the body refused to receive the Rev. A. M. Hart upon transfer from the East Arkansas Presbytery. The examination and the appeals and disputes arising from it attracted wide attention and set in motion an extended period of controversy reaching all the way to the General Assembly. These appeals involved both theological and procedural questions. The matter was covered in close detail in both the church and secular press. Acting against the advice of the presbytery's Commission on the Minister and His Work, the congregation of Meridian's Trinity Presbyterian Church had voted to extend a call to Hart, as was their right, but presbytery approval was required in such cases, as the commission's role was advisory to both a congregation seeking a pastor as well as the presbytery into whose membership the pastor would be received. Hart, a native of Staunton, Virginia, was educated at Davidson College and Columbia Theological Seminary. He had been ordained by the Presbytery of Mississippi in 1953 to serve at Fayette and Union Church, after which pastorate he had served for six years in Wynne, Arkansas. He was married to the former Muriel Gear, daughter of Columbia Seminary dean and theology professor, the Rev. Felix B. Gear.

Conservative members of the presbytery objected to Hart's social and theological views. More liberal members accused conservatives of prejudice. According to filings lodged with the General Assembly in January 1962, "Trinity Presbyterian Church of Meridian, Mississippi contemplated filling a vacancy by calling the Rev. A. M. Hart of East Arkansas Presbytery. It was advised [on January 16] by the Commission on the Minister and His Work of Central Mississippi Presbytery that the Commission would disapprove a call to Mr. Hart on grounds involving Mr. Hart's views on integration, church union, and other matters. The session of the church therefore sought advice from the presbytery as to whether presbytery would regard the reasons given by the Commission as a proper basis for withholding a call. After some debate, Presbytery [on January 18] tabled the matter and took no action. Trinity Church proceeded to issue the call, and Mr. Hart moved on the field."[679]

[678] See McAtee, *Dreams*, 92-106.

[679] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 18, 1962): 27; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 50.



—Presbyterian Historical Society

According to written statements submitted to the Synod of Mississippi by persons opposing the call of Meridian's Trinity Church, Central Mississippi Presbytery refused to receive the Rev. A. M. Hart, in part, due to his anti-segregation views.

At its April 19 stated meeting, after noting the statement of its Commission on the Minister that it did "not concur in this call as was stated to the representatives of the Trinity Presbyterian Church, meeting with the Commission on January 16," the presbytery voted on a procedural basis to examine Hart "with a view to his reception from East Arkansas Presbytery, with the matter of placing Trinity Church's call in his hands to be determined after his acceptability to the presbytery was determined." The Rev. John Reed Miller, pastor of Jackson's First Church, conducted the examination in theology. The presbytery voted 52 to 32 not to sustain the examination in theology.

When the examinations in other areas as required by *The Book of Church Order* were completed, the body voted 55 to 27 not to sustain the examination as a whole. Hart, therefore, was not received into the presbytery, and the call from Trinity Church was not placed in his hands.[680] A complaint to the synod was made on the ground that the presbytery's actions were "prejudiced by the improper standards used by the Commission on the Minister and His Work in evaluating his suitability and by their failure to make adequate investigations relative to his suitability." The complainants objected both to the "form and content" of the examinations, alleging that these were, "based on questions which frequently exceeded the constitutional requirements for ordination of a minister, or especially his reception into a presbytery." All 27 commissioners who had voted to sustain Hart's examination signed the complaint. The presbytery appointed a committee to respond to the complaint before the synod.[681]

Some alleged that Hart's anti-segregation views were the cause of his rejection. As Hart remembered the event, after he was disapproved by the presbytery's Committee on the Minister and His Work, representatives from the congregation's pastor search committee were called in and told that, "If your pastor holds the social views that we are told he does, then it would be impossible for him to interpret the Bible correctly." The complaint lodged with the General Assembly specified that among other things his views on integration and church union were at issue.[682] Excerpts from the sessional records of Trinity Church printed in the minutes of the synod, recorded impressions

[680] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 19, 1962): 64-65.

[681] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 19, 1962): 64-65; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 6, 1963): 90.

[682] A. M. Hart to R. Milton Winter, July 4, 2014.

of the situation from the perspective of the congregation's Pastor Nominating Committee. Among those quoted were elders Frank J. Buchanan, H. S. Little, George W. Shaw, and W. V. Ludlam. Buchanan wrote that

> Mr. Little and I attended [the meeting of Central Mississippi Presbytery's Commission on the Minister and His Work] on Tuesday, January 16th. . . . We were advised by Chairman [B. I.] Anderson that the Commission, as a result of its investigation had voted that the Commission doubted that Rev. A. M. Hart was a suitable person to be called to serve as minister at Trinity. Our inquiries as to specific shortcomings on which this decision was based were first answered by Chairman Anderson stating that they could be in the fields of theology or church government or social problems, without any statement as to how these applied to Rev. Hart.
>
> Upon our insistence that we be advised wherein Rev. Hart was found unsuitable. . . . Anderson stated they would not reveal the sources of their information. . . .Anderson then read a letter from Mr. [R. G.] Kennington [an elder in Jackson's First Church] written in casting his vote against the desirability of Rev. Hart, which letter Chairman Anderson stated represented the sum of the views of the Commission. The letter, as we understood it, made no statement as to any specific shortcomings of Rev. Hart, and stated that the views of Rev. Hart as to the fields mentioned therein were unknown to the writer.
>
> We emphasized that if there were any valid reason, based on facts, that Rev. Hart should not be called, we were entitled to know such facts to properly carry out our obligations.
>
> 1. Mr. Kennington then offered to clarify his letter and the reason for his position. He then discussed in some detail the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, referring particularly to the fact that He did not undertake to alter the existing social and political structures and conditions. Mr. Kennington stated that in recent years our Church has entered on these fields [and] that such action by the Church is not warranted by the Scriptures. On our query as to how this applied to Rev. Hart, Mr. Kennington said that he had inquired from persons outside our Presbytery and was advised that Rev. Hart elevated the authoritativeness of the Church on these matters to a plane above that considered proper by Mr. Kennington.
> 2. Rev. [Robert C.] Duhs [pastor of Westminster Church, Vicksburg] stated that he understood Rev. Hart is Pro-Integration and Pro-Church-Union, and unsuitable on account of his views on these matters.
> 3. Dr. O. M. Anderson stated that he had inquired of one person outside of our Presbytery [and] that he was informed that Rev. Hart, "Goes down the line with Richmond [presumably a reference to the PCUS Board of Christian Education, headquartered there] and is very vocal about it." He told us of the conservative instruction he received while at Seminary [a retired pastor who had served at Hollandale and Rolling Fork, Anderson had graduated from Union Seminary in Virginia in 1911] and stated that all of these young ministers are being taught entirely different ideas at our seminaries in recent years.
> 4. [The Rev.] R. E. Hough [pastor emeritus of Jackson's Central Church] stated that he understands Rev. Hart has very strong views on integration and Church union and Trinity being a comparatively young church, [that] Rev. Hart would therefore not be suitable. He further said these strong views of Rev. Hart would weaken his ministry both in Trinity and in Presbytery.
> 5. Rev. [A. H.] Freundt [pastor at Forest] stated that from his investigation Rev. Hart might be in accord with the school of thought in the Church that churches and schools should integrate.
> 6. Rev. [Leland C.] Jorgensen [pastor at Yazoo City] stated that the views which he understood Rev. Hart to hold regarding integration and church union indicated a probable failure of Rev. Hart to believe in the infallibility of the Scriptures. . . .

When the Hart matter was brought before the Synod of Mississippi in June 1962, the body voted to sustain

the complaint offered by members of the Central Mississippi Presbytery, and a Special Judicial Commission was appointed by the moderator to resolve the matter. The Rev. Robert H. Walkup of Starkville was named as chair the commission.[683] After hearing the various parties in the Hart case, the Special Judicial Commission directed that the matter be remanded to the presbytery, with instructions "that Hart be re-examined and that a full, complete, and properly authenticated transcript of the examination and all proceedings related to it be filed with the commission."[684] The presbytery, however, refused to reexamine Hart, sending its objections to the synod in the form of a complaint against its directive.[685]

When the synod convened in June, the complaint of Central Mississippi Presbytery was presented before the synod by the Rev. John Reed Miller. The presbytery was rebuffed by a vote of 66 to 37, after which Miller gave notice that an appeal against the synod's action would be made to the General Assembly. The synod voted to uphold the Special Judicial Commission in that part of its report involving the Hart matter, thus making the commission's action its own. The Special Judicial Commission then issued a detailed opinion, upholding the synod's order that Hart be reexamined and that a proper documentation of the proceedings be made.[686]

The Central Mississippi Presbytery's appeal was heard by the Assembly's Permanent Judicial Commission in Asheville, North Carolina, on April 21-22, 1964. It was the first matter to be adjudicated by the Assembly's Permanent Judicial Commission, which had just been organized as a continuing body at the Assembly level. It spent 29 hours in consideration of the appeal. After hearing representatives of the presbytery and the synod, the Permanent Judicial Commission issued a preliminary judgment (afterward confirmed by the Assembly) that the presbytery's appeal should be denied in each of its particulars and that the actions of the Synod of Mississippi in 1962 and 1963 should be confirmed.[687]

The General Assembly ratified the findings of its Permanent Judicial Commission, sustaining the synod.[688] It ordered the presbytery to re-examine Hart, with instructions to keep a full record of the case—the implication being that it would then exercise its right of review and control by determining whether the presbytery's decision was sufficiently unwise, inequitable, or unconstitutional as to call for reversal. *The Outlook* noted that the situation was attracting great interest "as Hart is the son-in-law of General Assembly moderator, Felix Gear."[689]

Pursuant to synod's order, a called meeting of the presbytery was held at Pearl, Mississippi, for the purpose of carrying out the directive to re-examine Hart and to ensure that an exact record was made, and an experienced court reporter was employed to make a stenographic transcript of the proceedings.[690] On a vote of 18 to 54, the presbytery voted not to sustain the portion of the examination dealing with theology.[691] The presbytery proceeded to examine Hart in other areas—church government, sacraments, etc. On a motion to sustain the examination as a whole, the presbytery voted by a margin of 49 to 16 not to sustain. Further objections and complaints resulted; however, in a called meeting of the synod, November 4, 1965, a number of complaints and countercomplaints ensued. However, the proceedings were rendered null because Hart had accepted a call as associate pastor in the Second Presbyterian Church of Little Rock, Arkansas. In its final report on June 7, 1966, elder William F. Winter, moderator of the Special Judicial Commission (Winter had succeeded the Rev. R. H. Walkup who had accepted

683 Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (June 6, 1962): 29.

684 Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 11-13, 1962): 25-26, cf. pp. 99-112; see also Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 18, 1963): 69-117; *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (June 8, 1962): 1.

685 Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 19, 1962): 76-78, 8-82; "Mississippi Presbytery Defies Synod Order," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (August 6, 1962): 3.

686 Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 11-13, 1963): 18; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 19, 1963): 123-26; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 48-58.

687 Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 48-58.

688 Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 50-58.

689 "Central Mississippi Presbytery Again Rejects Hart," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (July 27, 1964): 1, 3.

690 Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 9, 1964): 23-24; Transcript of the Re-Examination of A. M. Hart by the Presbytery of Central Mississippi (July 9, 1964): 42, 69, 85, 81-82.

691 Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (June 9, 1964): 129.

a call to a church in Texas) declared that the Presbytery of Central Mississippi had "erred in conducting an examination which was improper, arbitrary, and oppressive in that bias and prejudice were manifest in both the form and content of many questions asked Mr. Hart." The report also stated that "in debating and acting upon the matter of expeditiously making available to Mr. Hart and Complainants the transcript of the proceedings of July 9, 1964, the Presbytery exhibited bias and prejudice, and its actions were improper, arbitrary, oppressive, and impaired the procedural rights of Mr. Hart and Complainants," and it admonished the presbytery "to review carefully its procedures of examination to the end that future difficulties of this kind may be averted and the spirit as well as the letter of our Constitutional processes be preserved." The judicial committee's report was adopted by the synod.[692]

Many, including A. M. Hart, credited the Rev. R. H. Walkup, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Starkville, who chaired the Special Judicial Commission until he moved to Texas, with carrying the Hart matter forward in the Synod of Mississippi. Years afterward, in a letter to Walkup's widow, Alice Thomason Walkup, Hart gave his account of the affair:

> The Meridian Trinity pulpit committee asked in late 1961 permission to nominate me to the congregation as pastor. I gave it. The Central Mississippi Presbytery Committee on the Minister and His Work declined to approve their taking the nomination to the congregation.
>
> The Trinity Session sent the two elder members of the pulpit committee to inquire of the Presbytery committee why I was deemed unsuitable. Each member of the Presbytery cited his 'reasons' for voting not to approve, saying things like 'If Mr. Hart thinks like I've been told he does about social issues, then he's probably not sound on the inspiration of Scripture.' The committee chairman followed the two Trinity elders into the hall as they were leaving and said to them, 'If you want to know what this is really about, look into the matter of a letter Mr. Hart wrote to the trustees of Chamberlain-Hunt Academy.'
>
> (A couple of years earlier, having verified that the CHA trustees were in the process of firing the Presbyterian minister Bible professor [the Rev. E. G. Boyce] on their faculty because 'he had made, in class, derogatory remarks about the Citizens' Council,' I circulated to the trustees a letter of protest.)
>
> I was finally re-examined by the Presbytery some 27 months later, with a court reporter transcribing. The re-examination was almost identical to the original. The Presbytery voted to not approve. Again, there was an appeal to Synod protesting the re-examination, made as I recall, again by members of the Presbytery rather than by the Trinity Session.
>
> Before the appeal of that re-examination could make its way through the ecclesiastical court system, I received a call to be Associate Pastor of Second Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. Since it seemed best for Trinity Church and my family and I to accept that call, the case became 'moot' and was never finally adjudicated. . . .
>
> Before I told the Trinity pulpit committee they could proceed in spite of the Presbytery's opposition, I consulted with one of the 'white hat' leaders within the Presbytery to see if there was any way anybody could guarantee my family's security in case the Presbytery did indeed decline to receive me—and I was told there was no way that could be done. I'll be forever grateful for the sensitivity of the Synod Commission, sensitized I've no doubt by Bob Walkup, in allowing Trinity to use my services until the matter was finally adjudicated. . . .[693]

Although the Hart matter did not yield a final determination, it was cited by conservatives as hardening a determination to work for a separate, conservative denomination. Not since the heresy trial of the Rev. Theodore Clapp, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans (the Presbytery of New Orleans was then part of the Synod of Mississippi), had there been such controversial or extended litigation (1828-1833) involving a particular minister.

[692] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 7, 1966): 22-23.

[693] A. M. Hart to Alice Walkup, September 22, 1995, cited in Hines, 119-22.

During this tense era in the life of Central Mississippi Presbytery, questions put to candidates for ordination or ministers being presented for reception focused on matters where the body felt its conceptions of orthodoxy were under challenge. Many believed that other quarters of the Church had capitulated to unorthodox ideas; they were determined that this should not happen in their midst. The Rev. Robert W. Tabscott wrote in 2004 recalling his examination before the Presbytery of Central Mississippi, February 23, 1967, pursuant to his call to become pastor of Jackson's Covenant Church. The questions involved many controversial issues in theology.[694] Some of the questions also involved Tabscott's views about segregation and civil rights.

Governor William F. Winter later recalled that, Tabscott may have been "a little too forthright for his own well-being," as many of his examiners were "literalists" in their understanding of the Bible. Winter remembered that the African American church sexton took great interest in the examination, realizing that Tabscott "was obviously on his side." A year or so later, after preaching a powerful sermon following the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Winter said Tabscott was told by one of his elders that he had had three chances. "This was Strike Three." Tabscott accepted a call to St. Louis where he spent the rest of his ministry.[695]

The ongoing matter of the Central Presbytery's relationship to the Synod of Mississippi and the rest of the PCUS still would not rest. Growing out of the synod's report on the Hart matter, the 1967 General Assembly ordered the Synod of Mississippi to meet that autumn and take "proper steps toward determining that the examination of ministers from other presbyteries, seeking admission into Central Mississippi Presbytery are reasonable in length and in the nature of the questions asked, and that these examinations do not discredit either the ordination vows of the ministers seeking admission, or the integrity of the presbyteries from whence they come with valid letters of transfer." The Assembly also directed that the synod "take proper steps toward determining that Central Mississippi Presbytery's Commission on the Minister and His Work, in exercising its right to pass on the suitability of ministers for membership in the presbytery, [did not] 1) Deprive a congregation of its right to call a pastor of its own choice; and 2) Apply tests in determining suitability that have no constitutional basis."

Oxford Armageddon: Courageous Presbyterians Urge Obedience and Order as Ole Miss is Integrated

The riots preceding the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi, the assassination of Medgar Evers, and the murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, would shape perceptions of Mississippi during the 1960s. Meredith would officially become a student at Ole Miss on October 1, 1962, after a riot in which two persons were killed, 28 federal marshals suffered gunshot wounds, and 132 other people were injured. As legal historian Jack Bass has noted, "The explosion climaxed a constitutional crisis overshadowed historically only by the Civil War."[696]

Several Mississippi Presbyterians played important roles in bringing peace to that troubled community in the days leading up to and after Meredith's admission to the university. Among them were Will Lewis Sr., an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford, Alton Bryant, a former elder in the congregation, and the Rev. Murphey C. Wilds, the church's pastor. Lewis was one of the town's most prominent merchants. Bryant was then serving as the University of Mississippi vice-chancellor for its Jackson medical school but was closely monitoring the situation in Oxford. Wilds had served the Oxford Church since 1955.

Knowing that a serious confrontation was coming, Wilds tried to prepare his congregation and community. On Sunday, September 16, he took as a sermon text, Jesus' beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" [Matthew 5:9]. He said,

694 Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (February 23, 1967): 45.

695 Telephone interview, William F. Winter with Milton Winter, February 13, 2015.

696 Jack Bass, *Unlikely Heroes: The Dramatic Story of the Southern Judges of the Fifth Circuit Who Translated the Supreme Court's Brown Decision into a Revolution for Equality* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981): 172.

All of us know that this past week a ruling came from Justice Black of the United States Supreme Court ordering the enrollment of a Negro student at the University of Mississippi. I do not propose to discuss the rightness or wrongness of this today. I am fully aware of the fact that we, in this church, have been able to disagree, where we have, in love and respect for each other. For this I will ever be grateful to our God; that our love in Christ is greater than our differences in thought and interpretation.

I do propose, however, that we consider one facet of it upon which I feel we Christians all agree, its being totally beyond my comprehension that we do not. This is what the Gospel has to say to us and our lives in the next few weeks as events continue in the direction in which they are headed. . . .

The very fact that peacemakers are identified by our Lord is indicative of the fact that there are the opposite, peace-breakers, who labor for strife and turmoil rather than for peace.

These have been seen, in situations similar to our own here in Oxford, inciting and fostering violence, making physical threats and inflicting bodily harm on those involved. They have been seen enlisting unthinking people in their activities, people who would never have given their consent and support had they given any prior thought and prayer to their participation. . . .

These are the opposite of those of whom our Lord speaks. . . . Please note that Jesus does not speak of those who simply refuse to have anything to do with peace-breaking. There is a positive angle here. It is an active word. Jesus is speaking of those who actively contribute to bringing peace out of chaos, who realize they have a responsibility to mold and shape the existence of peace. But how can this be done in our present situation? How can we be peacemakers?

There can be a recognition of the voice of authority. This is primary in the maintenance of law and order and is the first thing which must go if disorder is to be brought about. You on the campus know full well what voices of authority exist. Then know full well for yourself that the Christian will render obedience to authorities except in those rare instances where these are at cross-purposes with the authority of God. To refuse obedience to lawful authority is a dangerous practice and is not to be entered into without long and deep soul searching as to the actions and their consequence. The law of God and man agree on this.

Next is a refusal to stand by and watch any disorder which might come about at the instigation of others. This refusal is a positive step toward peace for the simple reason that those who foster strife must have an audience to lend seeming moral, if not active support.

Then there is a contribution to be made to peace through one's conversation. No one should know as well as students the talk that goes on a campus, the deep discussions at midnight in which many a course of life is unconsciously determined for some who listen. Let your voice be one strong for peace in such talking. . . . Silence gives consent. . . Let your voice as a Christian be the one to break the silence.

On September 30, Wilds addressed the matter again, briefly. He said,

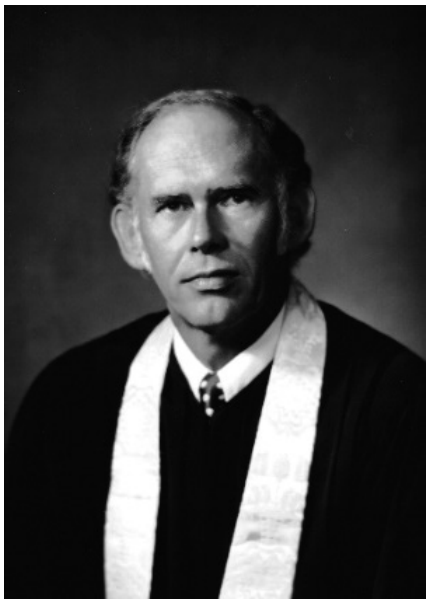
Our immediate world is being shaken, by moves and countermoves, by rumors, by uncertainty, by words and actions, by helmets and gas masks and nightsticks and cogs, by fear—and you and I must go on living in it.

It is so easy for us to think our community is the only one to be caught up in a crisis of such a nature. We listen to the Mississippi news and then turn off the radio. If we listened longer, we would have it brought to mind that we are not the only people whose part of the world is shaking today. And the writer of the Hebrews maintains that we, and others in the world, are not the only ones in history who have had their world shake about them. The world has been shaken over and over. And history affirms that this is so' [Revelation 19:6].

By the time Wilds finished his sermon, thousands of federal troops were on their way to Oxford, ordered by President John F. Kennedy, to enforce the Supreme Court's ruling.

Segregationist Pressure Builds Opposing University Integration

In the final days before Meredith's admission, the Mississippi legislature passed a resolution titled, "A Concurrent Resolution Declaring It to Be the Sense of the Legislature That Each and Every Act of the Sovereign State of Mississippi, as Performed Through and by Its Proper Officials, In Connection with the Matter of James Meredith, Has Been Legal Under the Laws of the State of Mississippi and Under the Constitution of the United States of America, and That Every Act of the Attorney General and the President of the United States in This Matter Has Been Illegal and in Direct Violation of Certain Articles of and Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America."



—photo courtesy of Scott Wilds.

The Rev. Murphey C. Wilds, pastor at Oxford, was outspoken during the Meredith crisis.

As pressure mounted to enroll Meredith, Governor Ross Barnett issued a statement that, "Schools will not be closed if this can possibly be avoided, but they will not be integrated." The governor declared that, "I interpose the rights of the sovereign state of Mississippi to enforce its laws and to regulate its own internal affairs without interference on the part of the Federal government." Twenty-eight state officials pledged to "go to jail" rather than surrender to the "insidious attack of the Court of Appeals on constitutional government." State Attorney General Joe Patterson compared U. S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy to a "jackass braying at a great American eagle." Barnett declared, "We are facing the most critical hour in the history of our nation. We must either submit to the unlawful dictates of the federal government or stand up like men and tell them, 'Never!'"

State Representative Joe Wroten of Greenville accused the governor of urging Mississippians "to bear arms against the United States." *The Pascagoula Chronicle* said that Barnett had reached "the point of no return. It is not the Kennedy administration that is making demands upon Mississippi, it is the United States of America, it is democracy itself, it is the whole of humanity." Ira Harkey, the editor, believed that defiance could "ruin Mississippi." Congressman Frank Smith, of Greenwood, said the governor was leading the state down "a blind alley, which threatens our great university," adding that, "Whether we like it or not, the question of state *versus* federal law was settled 100 years ago." As Erle Johnston has remarked, "Except for the handful who openly opposed the governor, white Mississippi seemed lined up solidly behind him. Never had any governor in Mississippi been backed so vigorously by so many people."[697]

[697] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 155.

Behind the scenes, Robert Kennedy and Barnett negotiated a deal to enroll Meredith, with the protection of a small contingent of federal marshals, but the duplicitous Barnett publicly encouraged defiance. As word spread that Meredith would arrive at Ole Miss on Sunday evening, September 30, hundreds of angry segregationists descended upon Oxford. Barnett informed Kennedy that he could not guarantee the peace, pulling the highway patrol from the scene even as rioters began pelting federal marshals with bricks, Molotov cocktails, and eventually bullets. The outnumbered marshals fired tear gas to disperse the crowd, and order was restored only after the arrival of more than 20,000 army troops sent by President Kennedy. When the smoke cleared the next day, two people had been killed and scores more wounded. Several members of the Oxford Church—employees of the university—struggled at great risk to perform their duties on campus as the mayhem unfolded.[698] A secretly recorded conversation between Governor Barnett and President Kennedy was prescient of the way some in the state were coming to feel about their national affiliation. Barnett told Kennedy, "We have been part of the United States, but I don't know whether we are or not."

"Are you getting out of the Union?" Kennedy asked.

"It looks like we're being kicked around—like we don't belong to it."

Indeed, from one's perspective, it seemed either that Mississippi was again seceding from the union, or that the state—or at least the small city of Oxford and its university—were occupied territory. When the affair ended, in addition to the deaths and physical harm suffered, much property had been damaged or destroyed, and the governor and lieutenant governor faced federal charges of criminal contempt as 1,300 federal soldiers kept the peace on the university campus and in the city of Oxford. Mississippi and its white citizens had become, in the eyes of many, objects of contempt and condemnation. Serious damage had been done to the state's reputation that would take decades to repair. Yet, at the time, many backed the governor and his segregationist allies.[699]

On the afternoon of September 20, the university's board of trustees had voted to invest Governor Barnett, "with the full power, authority, right, and discretion of this Board" in all matters dealing with Meredith's attempt to enroll. As such, Barnett became the registrar. On the same day, Barnett secured from the Hinds County Chancery Court an injunction prohibiting the board of trustees from registering Meredith. On the same day in Oxford, a large crowd had begun to assemble in front of the Lyceum, the university's administration building. At one point, a group of students tried to haul down the American flag and replace it with a Confederate flag. Other students thwarted the attempt of trustees to register Meredith.[700]

Will Lewis Strengthened Resolve of Fearful University Workers

Will Lewis Sr., a longtime Oxford resident, and an active and devoted member of the First Presbyterian Church, served for many years as an elder and Sunday school teacher. He first taught the men and then for many years a couples' class, inspiring and encouraging all who participated. As part owner of the J. E. Neilson Co., a large department store on the town square, Lewis and Neilson were the first business owners in Oxford to employ African Americans as clerks. As the integration crisis on the university campus developed, Lewis was told that African American employees of the university were about to leave their work because they felt threatened and afraid. He went to them, and because he was a trusted local figure, the workers were persuaded to remain—an action credited for keeping the university open during difficult times. Lewis understood the role a merchant could play in a close-knit community, as persons of all classes traded in his store. He had a gift for leading others in public prayer, and after his death, his Sunday school class published a selection of his prayers. These showed deep concern, not only for personal righteousness, but also the individual's duty to promote the common good.

[698] Franklin E. Moak, *The History of the First Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., Oxford, Mississippi, 1951-1987—Sesquicentennial Edition* (Oxford: First Presbyterian Church, 1987): 30.

[699] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 148-50.

[700] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 150-51.

Oxford Ministerial Association Calls for Order and Action "Consistent with Christian Teaching"

Oxford possessed an active, close-knit ministerial association—a grouping not always found among territorial and doctrinally-focused clergy in the towns and cities of Mississippi. Noting the rising tensions, the Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian ministers in the Oxford community, joined by several of the local campus ministers, called on students and citizens of Oxford to band together to prevent lawlessness. They recognized that the situation was surrounded by external political agitation, mainly exerted by segregationist activists.

As tensions rose, the pastors and university campus ministers issued a statement to the community, which the pastors read from their pulpits on Sunday, September 23. It said that,

> In view of the critical situation occasioned by the conflict between Federal and State authorities over the application for admittance to the University of Mississippi by a Negro student, we, the following pastors and chaplains do solemnly and prayerfully urge the following:
>
> 1. That the entire population act in a manner consistent with the Christian teaching concerning the value and dignity of Man.
> 2. That Christians exert whatever leadership and influence possible to maintain peace and order among us.
> 3. That we all pray unceasingly for God's guidance of the leaders of this community and in our beloved state and nation.
> 4. That we make every effort to resist the pressures placed upon us by emotionally excited groups and uphold the honor and good name of the University of Mississippi.

The statement was signed by the Rev. Donald H. Anderson, Methodist campus pastor; the Rev. Wayne Coleman, pastor of the First Baptist Church; the Rev. Duncan M. Gray, Jr., rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church; the Rev. Walter Maloney, pastor of St. John's Catholic Church; the Rev. Clifford A. McKay Jr., Presbyterian campus pastor; the Rev. William A. Pennington, pastor of St. Andrew's Methodist Church; the Rev. Wofford K. Smith, University Episcopal chaplain; and the Rev. Murphey C. Wilds, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. (The minister of Oxford's Church of Christ lent moral support to the statement but was prevented by his church's beliefs from taking part in joint activity with members of other denominations.)

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals declined to issue a contempt order against the Board of Trustees, but "requested" the board to rescind its action in appointing Governor Barnett as registrar. An agreement was reached that Meredith would be registered in Jackson in the board's offices by 4:00 p.m., September 25.

Special Prayers Offered in South Mississippi Presbytery

People throughout the state were aware of the mounting crisis with its potential for violence. Many persons—even those who favored resistance—feared a conflagration in Oxford. During its stated meeting, September 25, in the First Presbyterian Church of Biloxi, the Rev. Morton H. Smith requested that the Presbytery of South Mississippi pause for a few minutes of silent prayer to be followed by an audible prayer "for the grave situation existing in our State and Nation." This was done, and Smith led the prayer.[701]

Such fears were confirmed as Barnett reneged on his agreement with the Department of Justice and refused to register Meredith. Federal officials then brought Meredith to the campus in Oxford where several moments of high drama occurred at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 26, as his attempt to register was blocked a third

[701] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (September 25, 1962): 6.

time—on this occasion when Lieutenant Governor Paul Johnson stood at the university's east entrance gate—hard by the Presbyterian manse. Johnson was a stand-in for Governor Barnett whose plane was delayed arriving from Jackson. Barnett was chagrined that he had not arrived in time, as he sought acclamation from segregationists who would have applauded his efforts, but when the governor heard what happened, he sought to gather anti-integrationist goodwill by congratulating Johnson for having "stood tall" against the federal marshals—words that would become Johnson's campaign slogan when he ran the next year to succeed Barnett as governor.

The Court of Appeals by then had issued a contempt citation against Barnett; now it issued a similar citation against Johnson. Again, Barnett negotiated with Attorney General Kennedy. In secret conversations they agreed that on Thursday, September 27, the governor "would bow to federal force" and allow Meredith to be registered on the Oxford campus.

Some were determined that this should not happen. On September 26, from Dallas, Texas, retired General Edwin A. Walker, who had commanded federal troops when President Eisenhower ordered the integration of Central High School, went on radio to call for an army, 10,000 strong, "to rally to the cause of freedom." He declared that, "This is the conspiracy of the crucifixion by anti-Christ conspirators of the Supreme Court in their denial of prayer and their betrayal of a nation." He said, "Mississippi: It is time to move. We have talked, listened, and been pushed around far too much by the anti-Christ Supreme Court! Rise . . . to stand beside Governor *Ross Barnett* at Jackson, Mississippi! Now is the time to be heard! Thousands strong from every State in the Union! Rally to the cause of freedom! The Battle Cry of the Republic! Barnett yes! Castro no! Bring your flag, your tent, and your skillet. At Little Rock in 1957 I was on the wrong side. This time I am on the right side, and I will be there." Hundreds of angry whites answered Walker's call and flocked to Oxford, presenting the city and the campus with an unruly and dangerous contingent far beyond the local authorities' ability to control.[702]

By this time, tensions in the state had reached an almost unbearable level. The Meredith crisis and Kennedy's response put a strain on Mississippi's patriotism. General Lee's battle flag increasingly appeared at public events. In the days leading up to the crisis, Governor Barnett was often photographed speaking with a Confederate flag draping his podium.[703] The Rev. Duncan Gray wrote that flying the American flag in front of his Oxford rectory during the Meredith crisis was seen as "an almost subversive act."

Efforts to Diffuse the Crisis

Some tried to avert the coming crisis. On Sunday, September 23, William H. Mounger, a respected Jackson business leader with Lamar Life Insurance Company (a cousin of Presbyterian minister Dwyn Milton Mounger),

[702] Russell H. Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965); Nadine Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie: Race and the Liberal Conscience at Ole Miss* (New York: Free Press, 1997); David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999): 281-313; William Doyle, *An American Insurrection: The Battle of Oxford, Mississippi, 1962* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Frank Lambert, *The Battle of Ole Miss: Civil Rights v. States' Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[703] Presbyterian minister and University of Mississippi research professor of history Allen Cabaniss explains that "these flags were never formally adopted by the Confederate Congress and never employed officially by Confederate veterans' organizations." The Army of Northern Virginia battle flag became the logo of the United Confederate Veterans and later, the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The battle flag was ubiquitous in Memorial Day observations, monument dedication ceremonies, and veterans' parades throughout the long era (1880s-World War II) in which commemoration and celebration of the Confederacy and Confederate soldiers and leaders was an important part of white Southern public life. See https://acwm.org/blog/myths-misunderstandings-confederate-flag/ Cabaniss says, further, that, "Out of that limbo emerged the modern imitation generally called the 'rebel flag.' This . . . owed its origin to the simplicity of the battle flag's design as well as to ignorance about the authorized flags of the Confederacy. It did not reach its great popularity until the 1950s, possibly owing to widespread southern white dissatisfaction with the federal government during that period. Several extremist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, have made notorious use of the *oblong* cloth. . . . Black students at the University of Mississippi protested the school's use of its sports teams in 1983, so that it was discontinued as an official symbol." By 1997, the university banned waving Rebel flags at games. "Flag, Rebel," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, 685.

met in the office of Baxter Wilson, chairman of the Mississippi Power and Light Co., along with W. Calvin Wells, an official of the Lamar Life Insurance Co., and Tom Hederman of *The Clarion-Ledger* and *Jackson Daily News* to explore options. (Wilson and Wells were elders in Jackson's First Presbyterian Church. Hederman was a member of First Baptist and Mounger, Galloway Methodist.) Two days later, Mounger arranged meetings with other business leaders, but without Hederman or Wells. The latter two were strong segregationists. Mounger hoped that without them, a more moderate plan might be devised. But the more moderate men were not able to go forward. They could not gather courage to challenge the "Old Guard."[704]

"Violence No Answer" was the headline of an editorial in *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* on September 28. "Playing politics and waving the Bonnie Blue Flag are not answers. The answers may be unpalatable. But not so bitter as hatred and violence. Finally, it is the young students—those now in the university and those who may attend in years to come—who must be considered. Mississippi needs their talents and services. It should not drive them away."[705]

On Saturday, September 29—the day before the Oxford riots—Ole Miss fans traveled to Jackson for a football game with the University of Kentucky. Observers described a packed stadium, which looked like a sea of Confederate flags. Governor Barnett addressed the crowd: "I love Mississippi! I love her people—her customs! And I love and respect her heritage." The crowd responded in song:

Never, Never, Never, Never,
No-o-o Never, Never, Never.
We will not yield an inch of any field.
Fix us another toddy, ain't yieldin' to nobody,
Ross's standin' like Gibraltar, he shall never falter.
Ask us what we say, it's to hell with Bobby K.
Never shall our emblem go
From Colonel Reb to Old Black Joe.

The display of support emboldened yet frightened the governor. Never had the governor been so cheered. He realized that he could not admit Meredith without loss of political popularity. He felt that he could not back down.[706]

Throughout the negotiations with the Kennedys, Barnett had emphasized three points: First, there would have to be a "show of force," so that he could say he was "overwhelmed;" second, he was not sure he could control his own supporters and even some law enforcement officers; and third, he felt he could not promise the maintenance of law and order. The president and attorney general insisted that Barnett commit himself to maintaining law and order, though they were willing to help him politically with a show of force. On Saturday, the president sent a telegram demanding an answer on this matter, and shortly before midnight, Barnett, greatly stirred by the acclamation he had just received at the stadium, declined to make the commitment. The president then had no choice but to federalize the Mississippi National Guard.[707]

The Rev. Robert H. Walkup Challenges Starkville Presbyterians

The Rev. Robert H. Walkup, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Starkville, recognized that the situation in nearby Oxford had statewide—indeed, national—implications. On Sunday, September 30, the morning before

[704] See Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 308; see David R. Davies, *The Press and Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001); Susan Weill, *In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press*, 1948-1968 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002).

[705] Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 122.

[706] Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 122.

[707] Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 124.

tensions at the Ole Miss campus overflowed, Walkup preached from James 1:1-8, taking as his text the apostle's words, "What do ye more than others?" He said that,

> These are difficult days. You know that without my telling you. You know how we've lived these last hours—prisoners of the news reports—hearing what we could hear and reading what we could read, and all of it seeming to us almost like a nightmare, a disquieting dream from some fantastic place unknown. . . .

He continued,

> There is a word of Scripture which keeps haunting me: 'What do ye more than others?' [Matthew 5:47]. *We are Christians!* We are not politicians. We are not skilled to understand maneuvering—but we are Christians! For 2,000 years now the gospel has been saturating our thoughts. . . . Is there any contribution that we can make that non-Christians cannot make? 'What do ye *more* than others?'

Walkup called himself and his congregation to account for their silence in the face of a need to speak out. He believed it was crucial that the Church not surrender its witness to pressure from Washington, the governor, the Citizens' Council, or the attitudes of the surrounding society. He gave a history lesson to his congregation:

> You will remember that one time there was an assembly of supposedly large men in Westminster Abbey. You will remember that the great bulk of these men were Englishmen—and the seasoning of the group was Scottish. They had met together to write a statement of Christian belief, which later became the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. But this assembly was split, and there was in that assembly almost the most learned man in Christendom, a Dr. John Selden.
>
> He was the great champion of the Erastian heresy. You all know the Erastian heresy; you just don't know it by that name. That's the heresy that teaches the supremacy of the state over the church. It's still with us. And Dr. Selden, learnedly and persuasively, presented the position of the Erastians in the assembly. And the poor Presbyterians had about given up hope. They felt that what he said was heresy, but they didn't know where to grab it to grapple with it.
>
> A saintly young Scotsman, almost the youngest man there, named George Gillespie, got up to speak. They'd watched him while Dr. Selden was speaking and all the time he'd been writing on a pad before him. He got up and put his hand on that pad and began to speak. And he spoke for an hour! Dr. Selden, himself, said later that in that one hour, George Gillespie destroyed ten years of study and work for him. And the whole course of that assembly was changed. So, men rushed to that note pad. They wanted to see his notes—the outline from which he had spoken. And over and over again, he'd written on that pad one Latin phrase: *Da lucem, Domine*—'Give light, O Lord.'
>
> 'Give light, O Lord'—that could be our prayer. We could spend the rest of this Lord's Day praying—for wisdom—for light—for understanding! We need light today, not heat. What we need today is not men with hot heads and big mouths, but men with cool heads and warm hearts. We've talked on the street corners now to about everybody, haven't we? How much have we talked in the closet to God? We've talked about men—but have we talked to *God* about them? We have a solemn duty of prayer. 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God' (James 1:5). We've gathered neighbors' opinions, but have we asked God's?[708]

[708] Robert H. Walkup, "Not Race But Grace," in *The Unsilent South: Prophetic Preaching in Racial Crisis*, ed. by Donald W. Shriver Jr. (Richmond: John Knox, 1965): 58-64. Shriver, the president of Union Theological Seminary in New York City collected and published sermons preached by courageous Southern ministers at the height of the civil rights crisis. Born in Norfolk, Virginia and educated at Davidson College, Union Seminary in Virginia, and Harvard University, he served a pastorate in Gastonia, North Carolina, after which he served in campus ministry at North Carolina State University, where certain church elders tried to have him removed because of his participation in the march on Selma, Alabama.

Rioting in Oxford Precedes Integration of University

Marshals arrived in front of the Lyceum shortly after 4:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, September 30. The marshals must have presented a strange sight to the students and faculty members on the campus, with their white helmets, armbands, gas mask pouches, sidearms, short tear gas guns, and bright orange gas-grenade vests. Again, they brought Meredith to the campus in preparation for his enrollment the following day, and during the hours that followed, as Meredith rested in the seclusion of a nearby dormitory room, the situation on the front campus deteriorated seriously. From Jackson, Barnett had a warrant issued to the sheriff of Lafayette County to arrest Meredith when he entered the county raising fears of a confrontation between federal authorities and the Highway Patrol. As the marshals formed their ring around the Lyceum Building, the crowd began to grow. They were boisterous, hurled epithets at the marshals, and flashed anti-Meredith signs, so that by 11:00 p.m., the situation had become grave, indeed; riot conditions prevailed.

Two members of the Senatobia Presbyterian Church, Bill Callicott and Mills Carter, were part of the Mississippi Guard units that were federalized. Callicott later said that he had seen "expressions of absolute terror" in the faces of his men. He said that he had served two years in World War II in England, France, and Germany, but "I was never as terrified as I was going onto the campus that night." He knew that outsiders had come to the campus, and that if violence erupted and someone was killed, "it could be my next-door neighbor."[709]

Snipers were active with rifles and shotguns, firing at marshals, soldiers, vehicles, and the Lyceum Building. Also hurled in the air were Molotov cocktails, pieces of concrete, and acid from the chemistry building. Two were killed. National Guardsmen reached the campus about 11:00 p.m., and they were greeted with live ammunition shot into their Jeeps. As Erle Johnston noted, "The rioting continued through the night. It was a miracle that only two persons were killed. Many were injured. But there was no way to identify the person or persons who started it. It was a spontaneous reaction to the firing of tear gas and most of the belligerents were not students."[710]

Murphey Wilds lived with his wife, Mary Rose, and two young sons, Mitch and Scott, in the church's manse on University Avenue near east entrance to the campus. At this entrance on the previous Wednesday morning, Lieutenant Governor Johnson had turned back U. S. marshals with Meredith in the initial attempt to enroll him on the Oxford campus as directed by the federal court. The Presbyterian manse thus afforded a close vantage point for all that was unfolding, and its occupants would find themselves more closely involved than perhaps they had wished or imagined.

The Rev. William G. McAtee, then pastor of the nearby Amory Presbyterian Church, recalled that Wilds "was not sure what was about to happen in the Sunday evening darkness because there were snipers nearby taking random shots into the tear-gassed night." He said that "Sometime before midnight, the most beautiful sight appeared, coming from downtown through the intersection. Here came the lead jeep of the recently federalized Mississippi National Guard, flying a large American flag and moving west toward the campus ahead of a convoy of federal troops." McAtee remembered that Wilds told him a sniper took refuge under the manse, where he was pursued by the federal soldiers. Afterward, he had to take the family to the home of the Rev. S. L. McCullouch—St. Andrew Presbytery's executive secretary—due to the lingering tear gas, which had been used to dislodge the sniper. Scott Wilds recalled finding empty tear gas canisters in the front yard of the manse following the riots.[711]

Early Monday morning, as the ruins still smoldered on the Ole Miss campus, William H. Mounger, interrupted the regular broadcast of his company's Jackson television station WLBT to make a statewide broadcast appealing for calm. He said, "We are part of the United States of America, and we must obey the laws of the United States of America." The address was greeted with wide acclaim, especially in other parts of the country,

[709] Doyle, *An American Insurrection*, 240-41.

[710] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 157.

[711] Moak, *History of the First Presbyterian Church, Oxford*, 30; William G. McAtee, *Transformed: A White Mississippi Pastor's Journey into Civil Rights and Beyond* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011): 54; William G. McAtee to R. Milton Winter, September 2, 2014.

including an article in *The New York Times*.[712] The day after Mounger's televised appeal, a group of 127 business and professional leaders met in Jackson's King Edward Hotel. No politicians were invited. Presiding over the meeting was Frank E. Everett Jr., an attorney and elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Vicksburg, who had advised and represented university officials during Meredith's lawsuit. It was the first time any sizable group of prominent white Mississippians had committed themselves to work publicly for law and order, even if this meant the integration of the university. As Erle Johnston later remarked, "Profit-minded leaders were aware that the isolation of a defiant Mississippi could mean stagnation or decline of the business economy."[713]

"Although the group decided at the outset to criticize no individual and to advocate no political cause, it did speak out, urging all Mississippians to accept a 'sane [and] sensible' approach to the social changes taking place." The business leaders urged that "a peaceful acceptance of these changes was absolutely necessary if Mississippi was to go forward," saying, "We are grieved at events which have taken place at the university. Enforcement of law and order and not mob rule is absolutely essential to the peace and safety of all of our homes and all of our citizens." They appealed to the students for "calmness" and "restraint and judgment."

The statement by the state's business leaders withdrew that important community's support from Barnett and other segregationist leaders, after which the segregationist movement for "massive resistance" was greatly weakened. As university historian Charles Eagles wrote, "The corporate pillars worried about their state's economic health and prosperity. Aware of the riot's potentially dangerous effects on attracting industry to Mississippi, they called for 'binding up our present wounds,' so the state could 'continue to march forward.'" Thus, in large measure, it was the business leaders, not the politicians or the moral and religious authorities, who called out the violence and took firm steps to move the state forward once more.[714]

As Monday morning dawned and after the situation on campus had been brought somewhat under control, some of the violence moved to downtown Oxford on the square, near the Presbyterian Church and the offices of St. Andrew Presbytery, located a block north of the town square on Lamar Street. A rioter ran through the unlocked church as a cloud of tear gas settled over the area. The Rev. Robert H. Walkup had driven to Oxford to attend a scheduled meeting of the presbytery's nominating committee. No one had called to say it had been canceled. As he drove into the city from the south, he topped a hill to find before him a great deal of broken glass glistening in the sun. He drove around the square toward the small office building where his meeting was to be held. There, on the square, he saw federal troops armed with bayonets. On the street before them was an angry group of rioters threatening them with glass bottles filled with gasoline. There, on the square, he saw former Army Major General Edwin Walker, who was directing the rioters against the federal marshals. Realizing the situation, Walkup knew there would be no meeting and drove back to Starkville.[715]

During the week following the riots at Oxford, automobiles on the streets of Starkville had blossomed with bumper stickers saying, "Get the Castro Brothers out of Washington" and "Help Ross Keep Mississippi Sovereign." Confederate battle flags were displayed in many windows, and a few students on the university campus had attempted to hoist a Confederate battle flag on the standard from which the "Stars and Stripes" was normally flown. Murphey Wilds criticized this concept of Mississippi sovereignty emblazoned on automobile bumper stickers and declared from his pulpit that "God is sovereign."[716]

[712] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 157-58.

[713] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 169, 378.

[714] Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, eds., *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

[715] McAtee, *Transformed*, 55; Scott Wilds to R. Milton Winter, September 17, 2014.

[716] Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 135.

Presbyterian Editors Speak Out

The Oxford riots were among the first violent confrontations of the 1960s movement for civil rights in America, and as such, they became the focus of much attention throughout the nation and around the world. On October 2, *Tupelo Journal* editor George McLean and co-editor Joe Rutherford, both members of the city's First Presbyterian Church, wrote that, "We have sown the seed of hate and violence and of inflexible opinion and we have reaped violence, death, and disgrace. Our University, its students, the people of Mississippi and the people of America have lost. . . . Some of us have failed by doing or saying things that we should not have done or said. All of us have failed by not doing or saying something that would have helped create a Christ-like climate of opinion rather than permitting growth of a spirit of hate and violence. . . . We cannot win our point by violence. That way all of us lose. We must learn to live together, to work together, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Only in this way can we avoid bitterness, hatred and conflict." Two days later, McLean proposed that the university, weakened by too much emphasis on "football and beauty contests. . . . rebuild on an even finer and more solid basis," as Tupelo had done after the 1936 tornado. McLean later headed a biracial committee for the city of Tupelo to promote racial harmony and cooperation among African American citizens and city officials and employers.[717]

Walkup Addresses Oxford Tragedy

On Wednesday night, at a service of preparation for the celebration of the Holy Communion the following Sunday, Walkup preached from Job 1:1-5, using as a text Job's words, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." He wondered if "in his concern for the sins of his sons [Job] forgot Job and the sins of Job. For it was Job who cursed the day he was born. Now," said Walkup, "let that speak to us in this dark hour."

> For we, too, are quite ready to confess for others. How quickly we have confessed the sins of President Kennedy in the last few days, and how quickly we have confessed the sins of Governor Barnett. This tragedy, this shame from which we are still numb—we confess is the result of sin. Was it the sin of the State Highway Patrol or the U. S. marshals which caused this thing? Maybe it was the outsiders—the hoodlums and the thugs who came pouring into our state.
>
> I was in Oxford Monday of this week, and what a sight I saw! The whole square was filled with men and boys—men of hate and violence, men who had come to defy the United States Army! Very well then, is the blood on their hands? Will it help much if I confess their sins? No! The blood is on my hands! For I, together with too many of our people, helped to create the impression that we wanted them. We made the way for men of violence. . . .
>
> And now—now we are meeting here tonight because soon we must come to Christ's table. Soon we must receive his body which was, you remember, broken by men of violence; his blood which was, you remember, shed by men who lived by hate. Can we come to his table with hate in our hearts? Can we do this in remembrance of him while we still feel contempt for some of his brothers? Contempt for those for whom he died?
>
> Oh, my dear ones—my poor sheep for whom God made me an under-shepherd, what can I say to you or to me? I have wept for us all these days. I can truthfully say with the psalmist, 'Tears have been my meat day and night' (Psalm 42:3). We talk too much, and we don't say enough, then something happens. Two thousand years of the gospel of Christ! It is too late now—we, too, confess the sins of other men. *Mea culpa*, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:13). There is blood on my hands; there is blood on all our hands, and nothing can cleanse us but the grace of God.

[717] *Tupelo Journal* (October 2, 1962); Blade, *Tupelo Man*, 175-76; 227, 230-31, 234.

Anticipating a theme that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., would sound in his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" that "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people," Walkup believed it was sinful for good people to stand by silent. He made the point with a poignant story from his own Mississippi family. He told of going back to school after lunch one day and seeing a crowd of people pushing into one of the stores downtown. Curious, he was able to weave his way through the crowd inside the store to see what they were looking at:

> I saw a man on the floor dead! I saw a man who had been shot about five minutes. He was 'black.' When I got out of the crowd, I asked who shot him, and they told me—it nearly broke my heart it was the man who let me ride his Shetland pony . . . and I went running to my grandfather distraught, and I said, 'Papa! Will they hang him?' He said, 'No, now calm down, son.'
>
> 'They'll hang him, won't they, Papa?' 'No, they won't hang him.' 'Well, what will they do to him?' He said, 'Now let that alone, boy.'
>
> And so, when it came out in the paper, I learned my first legal term. 'Papa, what does
>
> n-o-l-p-r-o-s spell?'
>
> 'It spells *nol. pros*. Why son?' 'Well, that's what they did; they *nol-prosssed* the case' (effectively throwing out the
>
> case by refusing to prosecute).
>
> What does that mean? It means sin, that's what it means. It was wrong? And my grandfather was the best man I ever knew! My grandfather was better than Job—but he didn't say a word. He didn't say a word! He didn't do a thing![718]

On Wednesday following the riots, the executive committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi commended the stand taken by the business leaders and called for a special service of prayer in churches on Friday. The Oxford clergy also spoke out. They called for a "time of repentance" to be observed in the town's churches the following Sunday. What might otherwise have seemed a bland or conventional call to calm and prayer, clearly aroused segregationist anger.[719]

Segregationist Criticism of Oxford Ministers

The Clarion-Ledger took umbrage at the comments of the Oxford ministers, writing on October 4 that their statements confirmed earlier predictions that "the scalawags and the moderates are going to crawl out of the walls now, because nobody likes a loser." The paper urged readers to "watch the peace-lovers come to the fore, grab a nig--r [*sic*] neck and start bellowing brotherly love." Referring to "scaly-backed professors and Judas-enrolled psalmists around the University of Mississippi," the paper condemned those who had "demonstrated disloyalty" by agreeing with the state's critics. But the editor of the weekly *Mississippi Methodist Advocate* (October 10, 1962) declared, "All of us are guilty! We in the church are to blame because we allowed such a force of hate to build up in our state."[720]

The Rev. A. H. Freundt Jr., a frequent contributor to *The Presbyterian Journal* and other conservative publications and, at that time, a supporter of segregation, penned a widely-circulated critique of the Oxford ministers, which was published in *The Citizen*, the official journal of the Citizens' Council of America, of which Jackson Presbyterian W. J. Simmons was president. He based his criticisms on the ground of state's rights and the

[718] Robert L. Walkup, "Communion Preparation Service," a sermon preached in the First Presbyterian Church of Starkville, October 3, 1962, in Shriver, *The Unsilent South*, 64-71.

[719] "Christians in the Crisis Hour," *Baptist Record* (October 11, 1962); "Oxford, Mississippi Pastors Appeal to Repentance," *Presbyterian Outlook* 144 (October 22, 1962): 3.

[720] *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (October 4, 1962).

Westminster Confession's admonition that churches should handle only "ecclesiastical" matters.[721] Meanwhile, according to Walkup, the Rev. Horace L. Villee of First Presbyterian Church in Columbus thanked God for men of courage "like St. Paul and Governor Barnett."[722]

Oxford Ministers Issue "Call for Repentance"

Thoughtful people in Oxford as well as throughout the nation were horrified by the events that unfolded in Mississippi. Preaching in Oxford on October 7, Wilds, along with the city's other ministers, brought a call for repentance to their congregations.

Wilds said:

> Today is World Communion Sunday. On it we remember that in Christ we are one with all Christians of all nations and all races, the wide world over, that those who are one with Christ as individuals immediately have the relationship of oneness with each other.
>
> The day has another meaning for us here in Oxford, as the ministers of the community have called upon the people of the community and state to make this 'a day of repentance for our collective and individual guilt in the formation of the atmosphere which produced the strife at the University of Mississippi and Oxford last Sunday and Monday.'
>
> Still, it stands that, over a long period of time while that which erupted Sunday was building up, we as individuals were silent when we should have spoken, inactive when we should have moved. We permitted inflammatory ideas to be encouraged and to exist. We did not object as many who claimed they would not stoop to violence themselves planted the seed of violence in the minds of others, which seed grew and was harvested Sunday night. Other sins of omission, over a long period of time, are just as grave as those sins of commission over a period of a few hours.
>
> Over and over in the Scriptures, we see that God deals with his people not only as individuals, but as a people. We see that the sin of some is the burden of all, that it is the responsibility of a people to confess and repent. You remember the words of God to the leader of his people: 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land' (2 Chronicles 7:14). So, the demand is upon us to confess our sin and seek forgiveness as a people.
>
> It is also our responsibility to confess any individual guilt in this matter. It may be difficult for us to see this, for the chances are small that any one of us here was personally involved in the incidents last Sunday and Monday.
>
> But more is demanded of us than a mere confession of our sins. And more is demanded of us than the profound sorrow and grief all of us know. Genuine repentance is, in its very essence, to do an about-face, to move in the opposite direction to that in which we have been going. This means for us: obedience where we have been disobedient; speaking where we have been silent; striving to undo the evil which has been done, rather than adding to it; living with Christian love and respect for every child of God, rather than with hatred and contempt for any.
>
> It means to work for reconciliation between those with differing ideas which have culminated in different actions, and who, by those differences, have been moved apart. Faculty and administration members, students, community and state citizens must be reconciled to each other.

[721] See Albert H. Freundt Jr., "Oxford Clergy Wrong in Calling for 'Repentance!'" *The Citizen* (October 1962): 2-3; Joseph Hardin Crespino, "The Christian Conscience of Jim Crow: White Protestant Ministers and the Mississippi Citizens' Councils, 1954-1964," in *Mississippi Folklife* 31 (1998): 36-44.

[722] Charles L. Stanford Jr., "Love Disqualified," sermon preached in Jones Memorial Presbyterian Church, Meridian, October 7, 1962, in Shriver, *The Unsilent South*, 72-76.

> To cite one very specific instance in this life of reconciliation, there can be no place whatsoever for resentment or bitterness toward those, personally known to us because they are in our National Guard, or unknown to us because they are from other areas of the land, who brought order out of chaos this week and who continue to maintain order in our midst. They are due our highest respect and our deepest appreciation for an unpleasant task they did not seek.

Wilds' sermon and those of the other Oxford ministers were much publicized. A clipping summarizing the sermon from *The Lexington Herald*, in Kentucky, is preserved among Wilds' papers.[723] Wilds received many letters from friends and minister colleagues. Clearly, the amount of interest (and criticism) generated indicates that it was no ordinary Sunday sermon.

The session of the Oxford Church met the following evening, October 8, and voted to extend a vote of thanks and appreciation to their pastor, "for the wonderful leadership he has given us during the trying times at the university and in Oxford." Wilds also received commendation from his friend, W. Alton Bryant, who wrote from Jackson the same day, "I want you to know how gratified we are that you have had the courage to speak out as you have concerning the tragic situation here in Mississippi. At least the voice of the Church has been heard in Oxford and over the state."[724]

Several other Mississippi Presbyterian pastors spoke in support of the Oxford ministers. The Rev. Charles L. Stanford of Jones Memorial Church in Meridian stressed corporate complicity in the events at Oxford, "Those of us who have remained silent on a great and grave moral issue have lent support to those who have spoken out on the side of error and evil." In his sermon and prayers, the Rev. J. Moody McDill of Jackson's Fondren Church (where Alton Bryant was then serving as an elder) also suggested that all white Mississippians shared responsibility for the deaths and injuries at Oxford. Such responses divided Mississippi Presbyterians. A group of Presbyterian pastors in Meridian voted down a proposal for a public statement about the Oxford riot.[725]

National and World Reaction to Ole Miss Situation was Swift and Harsh

The Oxford riots occasioned an avalanche of critical comment from outside the state and from around the world. Lydel Sims of *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* took particular note of the way segregationists used General Lee's battle flag as a symbol of resistance during the Oxford crisis.[726] He wrote that,

> The flag of the Confederacy has become a rallying point for hoodlums and crackpots from whom men like Lee and Forrest would have turned away with cold contempt. Inflamed by pious statements that invite violence while purporting to deplore it, the mob has gathered to fight the good fight for anarchy.

[723] A number of these letters may be seen in the Wilds Collection at the archives of the University of Mississippi.

[724] W. Alton Bryant to Murphey C. Wilds, October 8, 1962. Wilds Collection, University of Mississippi Archives.

[725] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 143-44; Stanford's sermon was published in *Pulpit Magazine*, a publication of *The Christian Century*, and in *Pageant Magazine*, as one of their "Great Sermons of the Twentieth Century" series.

[726] According to the American Civil War Museum in Richmond, "Even before World War II, cracks were evident in the foundation of the Confederate flag's status as a symbol of heritage. Occasional Northern and African American voices questioned the wisdom of displaying a flag they associated with disunity or treason. And young white Southerners began using the flag in distinctly non-memorial ways as a symbol of regional identity. The growing battle over the post-Reconstruction South's established racial order of Jim Crow segregation resurrected the Confederate flag's use as a political symbol." https://acwm.org/blog/myths-misunderstandings-confederate-flag/. The flag's first major appearance was in Birmingham after a walkout from the 1948 Democratic Convention, when Southern Dixiecrats, reconvened, with a dramatic procession led by former Mississippi Governor (and Presbyterian elder) Hugh L. White. The current Mississippi governor, Fielding L. Wright was nominated as vice-president, with South Carolina governor Strom Thurmond, on a states' rights and pro-segregation platform. Mississippi's Congressional delegation supported the movement, with Presbyterian U. S. Senator John C. Stennis offering support. Dennis J. Mitchell, *A New History of Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014): 392-93.

> That they will be turned back is scant relief for the shame and anger felt by reasonable people on both sides of the now-secondary issue of integration. It will be a long time before any of us get the feel of slime off our hands.

Sims was prescient. The presence and use of the Confederate battle flag at Ole Miss and in the state would continue to be debated as it was appropriated more and more by segregationist Americans and other right-wing individuals and groups. However, on November 21, two months after the Oxford riots, the Mississippi Senate adopted a resolution expressing its, "entire and utter contempt for the Kennedy administration and its puppet courts."[727]

Other Mississippians tried to make amends. Following the Oxford riots, the State Sovereignty Commission organized a sort of goodwill tour in which leading white Mississippians were asked to make speeches around the country to help restore the state's good name. Chancery Judge Michael L. Carr, an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Brookhaven, consented to be an ambassador for the State Sovereignty Commission. Addressing the Rotary Club of North Hampton, Massachusetts, he said, "We regret, and we do not in any sense of the word condone the violence that occurred at the University. That day at Oxford, all Americans witnessed one of the most tragic events in the history of our country—federal force against a sovereign state, brother against brother, education at bayonet point, violence at its worst, loss of two lives, injuries to others, property destruction, damage to the reputation of a great university, and deep wounds that will be long in passing."[728]

The situation for the Oxford ministers was complicated by the fact that not all editorial writers or politicians throughout the nation supported President Kennedy's action in sending troops to Mississippi. Notable among these was David Lawrence, editor of the conservative *U. S. News & World Report*. *Christianity Today*, a leading evangelical weekly, was also critical of their actions. Wilds received many letters of support from church leaders around the nation, including one from the trustees of New York City's Riverside Church. He also received some letters of critique (most enclosing copies of Lawrence's editorials), urging that he and the other ministers desist from their activities. Some letters were not worded charitably.[729]

St. Andrew Presbytery Issues Pastoral Letter

On Tuesday, October 16, while federalized National Guard troops were still encamped in Oxford, the Presbytery of St. Andrew held its fall meeting at the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus. There, Wilds and the Ole Miss Presbyterian campus minister, the Rev. Clifford A. McKay Jr., along with elder commissioner J. G. McMurray of Oxford, backed by the session of the Oxford Church brought a strongly worded resolution to the presbytery, with the request that it be directed to be read in each congregation as a pastoral letter.

As William G. McAtee remembered, "The presbytery soon became embroiled in a debate over what action it should take. . . . Some felt that we should take no action, since this was not the business of the church. Others felt that we should take a stand in support of Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss. It was friend *versus* friend and family *versus* family. All sorts of speculations were made about what had happened there and where blame should be placed. . . . After lunch the discussion took on a very serious tenor when Eade Anderson, pastor of the Greenwood Presbyterian Church and Bill Flanagan, pastor in transit from Byhalia to a new church development in Southaven, strode onto the floor in full battle dress from their encampment in Oxford. They had been called up as chaplains

[727] *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (October 2, 1962); Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 163.

[728] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 167.

[729] In 2014, the sons of Murphey Wilds donated his papers from the time of the segregationist riots, including hate mail he received, to the University of Mississippi archives. Wilds' sermon manuscripts are archived in the historical collection of St. Andrew Presbytery.

during the federalization of the National Guard." Stories of their firsthand experience in Oxford persuaded the body to adopt the Wilds-McKay overture.[730]

After much discussion, the overture was adopted 57 to 8. It said:

> As an overseer of Christ's flock, the Presbytery of St. Andrew addresses itself to the congregations under its care in these days of crisis and tension following the rioting and bloodshed within our bounds at the University of Mississippi and Oxford. The spirit of hatred and strife which manifested itself in this violence is contrary to the Spirit of Christ. We therefore admonish the communicants of our churches to give the Spirit of God that supreme place in our hearts and minds which will enable Him to drive from us the evil spirit which has ruled many of us.
>
> It is the duty of Christians at all times to carefully examine themselves beneath the guidance of the Holy Spirit that they may determine, in the face of sin, whether they have contributed to that sin in omission or commission, through thought, word, or deed. We therefore summon those of our communion within our bounds to undertake such a searching self-examination and to turn to true repentance as the Spirit leads them.
>
> The Presbyterian Church has always been, and remains, a church which insists upon order in all things. We therefore admonish those of our communion within our bounds to act only in those ways which promote order and peace and to use their every influence to the end that those officials charged with maintaining order may pursue their task with dedication and with diligence.
>
> Finally, we urge our communicants to pray for God's mercy and guidance for ourselves and for our state and national leaders, that we may truly praise and serve Him all our days.[731]

Only 24 hours before this letter was adopted, President Kennedy received word that launch facilities for Soviet nuclear missiles were under construction in Cuba. The ensuing crisis involving the Caribbean island, only a few hundred miles from the Mississippi coast, stirred considerable anxiety within the state, and few, perhaps, realized that there was a considerable Presbyterian presence on the island, the work of missionary efforts in earlier generations.

Murphey Wilds Speaks to the Wider Church

In response to a request from *The Presbyterian Survey*, Murphey Wilds offered the following reflection upon the recent events in Oxford:

> The violence which erupted at the University of Mississippi on September 30 following the arrival on the campus of a Negro student was not a spontaneous incident. It had been building up over the eight-year period following the Supreme Court school desegregation decision of 1954. During this time, the Citizens' Councils of Mississippi organized and carried on a constant oral and written campaign in opposition to any compliance with the decision of the court. This campaign, with the added defiance of the Governor in recent months, aroused passions in Mississippi which could not be turned off with the flip of a switch.
>
> The night James Meredith was escorted onto the campus, all the emotions that had been stored up over this period of time were loosed. They were supplemented by an invasion of many from outside the state, armed and unarmed, who had come to resist Meredith's enrollment by any possible means. That night will be remembered by those who observed any part of it as a night when all traces of humanity were erased from hundreds of people so that they became little more than wild beasts.

[730] McAtee, *Transformed*, 55-56.

[731] Sermon by the Rev. Murphey C. Wilds, September 20, 1962, cited in Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 344-45; Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (October 16, 1962): 20-21.

> The question is posed: Where was the Church during this period? Was it saying anything? The answer must be that the Church had a voice and that the Church spoke. In 1955 [the year Wilds began his ministry at the Oxford Church] the Synod of Mississippi answered the statement of the 1954 General Assembly which had called for the cultivation and practice of the Christian graces of forbearance, patience, and good will, and for the lending of assistance to those charged with the duty of implementing the decision of the Supreme Court. Its reply was, in effect, that the Assembly had erred in dealing with this issue and that it should get on with its exclusive task of preaching the Gospel to the whole world. Thus, the Presbyterian Church in Mississippi told its constituents and the state that the whole matter had nothing to do with Christianity. Although about two dozen members of Synod protested this action, the Church refused to provide any strong leadership during this period of build-up. Here and there individual voices were heard, but these were few, and some who were ministers were eased from their pulpits.

In the months preceding the actual enrollment of James Meredith, the Church, beyond communion lines, was attempting to provide some leadership. Denominational church groups on campus discussed the problems of the coming event. The result of these student discussions, their possible leavening influence, will never be known. After his enrollment, one of the first student groups officially endorsing the decision of the University administration to employ drastic discipline if student demonstrations continued [opposing Meredith's admission] was the Presbyterian Westminster Fellowship.

In September of this year, the ministers of the Oxford University community spoke concertedly on several occasions. A statement was read from Oxford pulpits which called upon the members of the community to act in accord with the Christian view of the worth of the individual, to avoid demonstrations and disorder, and to use their influence to work for peace and harmony. Later, they telegraphed an appeal to the Governor calling upon him to cease the defiance which was threatening to bring about a state of anarchy in the situation.

Following the rioting, the members of the clergy called upon the people of the community and state to make Sunday, October 7, a time of repentance for the collective and individual guilt of all in the formation of the atmosphere which had produced the strife. The call was also for full obedience to lawful authority. The day was observed in this way in Oxford. However, the papers which are read most widely across the state did not see fit to print this appeal until Sunday, which was too late for any state-wide observance to result. Despite this, a good number of other ministers in the state dealt with this subject in a strong way in their pulpits on this Sunday. Some had done this before the violence, as had the Oxford ministers.

> Much of the strongest leadership attempting to work for the restoration of order has been provided by laymen. The results of their labors will never be fully known and so cannot be fully appreciated. Without the words and actions of these, sometimes open, sometimes of necessity behind the scenes, matters might have been, and could still be, worse.
>
> On October 16, for the first time since 1954, a higher court of the Presbyterian Church within Mississippi openly expressed its concern in this area as the Presbytery of St. Andrew adopted a pastoral letter to be read in every pulpit within its bounds. This letter pointed out, among other things, that the ultimate solution to this problem, as of all problems in life, is a searching of self and society for the invasion of sin, the confession of that sin, and a coming to that true repentance which is a complete reversal of thought and action.[732]

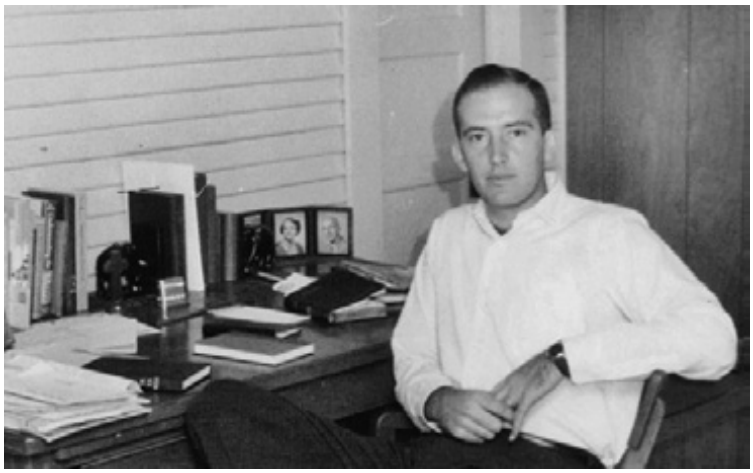
The action of both the presbytery and the local ministers' association demonstrated the strength that could be found in joint action by like-minded individuals. Without the strength to be found in a connectional Church or through an ecumenical alliance, it would likely have been much more difficult for individual members, either clergy or lay, to address the situation that unfolded in their community.

[732] *Presbyterian Survey* 52 (November 1965): 48.

Cliff McKay Was PCUS Campus Minister During Ole Miss Crisis

The Rev. Clifford A. McKay was a recent graduate of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, and interested in ministry to students. The Synod of Mississippi had an internship available at the University of Mississippi. He applied and in 1959 had been accepted to work for the synod as Presbyterian University Pastor in Oxford, under the tutorship of the Rev. Murphey Wilds, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. Wilds took a close interest in McKay's work. McKay preached regularly in the Oxford Church, and the two met monthly to discuss the campus ministry.

Born and reared in Georgia, McKay was a Southerner and well acquainted with the racial tensions then evident throughout the United States. Through a variety of experiences, McKay realized that segregation was not appropriate either socially or biblically. He described himself, as "not a crusader for integration," but said that "As I began my ministry it was essential that I be true to what I believed, and I believed that racial segregation was not defensible. I decided that I could not, and I would not deny my faith to retain a job, or because I might have to take an unpopular stand which might subject me to ridicule or persecution. I knew that my views on integration would not be popular." McKay realized that in Mississippi the need to include African Americans in the schools and the Church was unpopular both on the campus and in the Church. "I didn't feel it necessary to raise the issue myself, but I knew I had to stand up and be counted whenever the issue arose."



—photos courtesy of Cliff McKay

The Rev. Cliff McKay was campus pastor at Ole Miss during the integration crisis.

An integrated University of Mississippi Westminster Fellowship meeting, 1962.

McKay recalled that,

> Although most members of the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford were traditional Southerners in regard to race relations, they seemed to sense that change was coming and were beginning to consider that change. As a teaching elder, Murphey was both skilled and genial. He led the congregation with a gentle, but clear manner. He was respectful of parishioners' views, and they respected him.
>
> When the time came for him and me to take a stand with the other Oxford ministers, some in the congregation may not have agreed, but they were not surprised, and they did not rise up in arms. Many members of the congregation were from the University with a wider background and personal experience than most Mississippians. A number of these agreed with our stand, which was in fact very modest. We only called for obeying the law and the courts in allowing James Meredith to enter Ole Miss. But just obeying the law in support of integration was staunchly opposed by most citizens of Mississippi.
>
> The statement signed by the Oxford ministers was widely published and vilified throughout the state. Some church members, while disagreeing, recognized Murphey's and my leadership, and did not actively oppose. A few clearly disagreed with our stand and said so, but they agreed to disagree and didn't threaten to leave the church or lead a rebellion. They found other ways to express their opposition. [Several deacons on the finance committee recommended that Wilds be denied the usual salary increase the following January. Though the whole board approved the increase, Wilds refused to accept it under the circumstances then prevailing.] One parishioner, who had volunteered to prepare my tax forms when I first came, notified me he would no longer be able to do so. A few others drew back in similar small ways.
>
> The students were also divided. A few members of the Westminster Fellowship were actively supportive of Meredith's admission to the university and participated in a small group on campus that offered to sit by him in class and to walk with him as he moved from class to class. I'm sure some students who favored segregation participated less in the Westminster Fellowship, but there was no organized movement to withdraw, nor did a noticeable number pull back. We didn't push integration in our programming, but we didn't dodge it either. I tried to maintain an ongoing discussion within the group and to make sure that neither viewpoint excluded the other, nor did we exclude persons who held a different point of view. I felt that keeping them from pulling away from each other was, in and of itself, a significant exercise in Christian fellowship.

Clifford McKay was subject to criticism for his decision to befriend James Meredith personally. He wrote that,

> When Jim Silver, professor of history, who had led a group on campus supporting Meredith, asked me if I wanted to play a round of golf with him and James, I reasoned thus. Would I have initiated a golf game with Meredith myself? Probably not. Were there any reasons I should turn down Jim's invitation other than I didn't want to get involved, or I didn't want to upset people who strongly believed Meredith had no business as a student at Ole Miss? I answered both those questions "No." So I agreed to play.
>
> The game took place in January after emotions had cooled somewhat, but I still got anonymous, threatening phone calls, one asking 'What are you going to do with your thirty pieces of silver?' . . . a reference to Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus.
>
> There were ripples of reaction to my game in both the Presbyterian student and church communities, but very little. One couple tried to excuse my action, saying that Silver had manipulated me into playing, but that was not true, and I told them so. I had determined a clear standard for what I would do, and I followed that standard carefully and thoughtfully. My greatest concern was that I might disobey what I believed to be true—how God loved and cared for all his children. Likewise, my tolerance and acts towards those who held to segregation were also shaped by an understanding of God's love and care for them.
>
> I was grateful that my own children were all pre-school because I grieved for the school-age children that were projected into a fray of which they had no understanding. Hearing anger and frustration at home,

school children brought their parents' emotions to school. They ganged up on and fought with children whose parents held different views. There was much confusion in their hearts and minds, that mimicked the upheaval of the adults in their lives, and no one was available to comfort them or help them sort out what was happening.

During the fall, the afternoon hours that Murphey and I would have normally spent in pastoral visiting, we spent playing golf. We tried to make visits, but it was obvious that everyone was too wrought up for any constructive conversation or thought. Emotions were too strong and too raw. Also, Murphey and I were too stretched personally to interact, so we did something constructive—we exercised in the cool fall air. In those difficult days, the golf course was the one place where we didn't have to be on constant guard. Our conversation was about golf and other things far removed from Oxford. We seldom talked about the events swirling around us. I thought I had at least fair control of my emotions until one afternoon on the sixth hole of the Country Club course across the street from the airport where the 101st Airborne Division was camped in their tents, a truck backfired. Murphey and I both ducked for cover, mistaking it for gunfire. We felt a little sheepish when we realized it was only a harmless backfire, but it reminded us how stretched thin we were.

My fellow ministers of St. Andrew Presbytery were divided into two camps as well. A number were supportive, several weren't. Again, respect carried the day. There were civil conversations, and we all moved on. Dr. T. T. Williams was taken ill one Saturday evening and called to ask me to conduct the service at Tunica. My sermon topic and text were not in the bulletin. After the service, a member of the congregation approached me, 'That passage you preached from today . . . What was it? I don't think I agreed with it.' I cited the passage (2 John 3:10-18), and said, 'Sir, if you want to disagree with the scripture you're welcome to do so, but I commend you for recognizing it is the scripture with which you have an argument and not this young preacher.'"

The African American population of Oxford had little understanding of what was going on. One man who worked as a custodian on the campus said, 'I don't know what all the fuss is about. I come and go anywhere I want and nobody says a word about it.' And another, 'Why does that man Meredith want to go to school here? He could go to Jackson State or lots of other good schools without all this commotion.' They were confused and had no comprehension of what was at stake.

In the summer, the local theatre showed the movie, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and the following fall, the student musical on campus was *South Pacific.* When I left Ole Miss in June 1964, the students of Westminster Fellowship gave me a pen set for my desk in graduate school, engraved with these words addressing my venture in graduate school while shadowing the song from *South Pacific*, "You have to be carefully taught."

The lyrics of the song were:

You've got to be taught
To hate and fear,
You've got to be taught
From year to year,
It's got to be drummed
In your dear little ear.
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught!

McKay's reflections, indicated how carefully the Ole Miss students—as students are inclined to do—watched his example as well as listening to his words:

> One of the students who favored integration told me that all Westminster Fellowship respected my position as a 'quiet integrationist.' I was intrigued. 'If I'm quiet, how do they know I'm an integrationist?'
>
> 'Oh, they know,' he answered.
>
> I struggled to remain true to what I knew to be true while, at the same time, remaining in touch with those who believed otherwise.
>
> I feel that those most who opposed integration realized that change was coming, and perhaps, deep down, realized that the integration of the races was a good and right thing, and they began, gradually, to move toward a new day. But segregation was so pervasive and so deeply ingrained in all they knew and all they did—its emotions were etched so firmly in the psyche that I thought it might take several generations to move beyond it. The first step was to take a stand, to make a commitment that we are all God's beloved children, for whom Christ died, then step by step, day by day, to live into that commitment in obedience to Christ.
>
> I was shocked at the fiftieth anniversary of Meredith's admission, that the nightly news showed a bronze statue of him on the campus. Meaningful change had come much quicker than I expected.

Cliff McKay's Recollections of James Meredith's Admission to Ole Miss

Clifford McKay's recollections of the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi and the unrest that accompanied that situation have not been published previously. His memories, penned October 13-14, 2014, add detail to the record of those days:

> The day James Meredith was brought to Ole Miss by U. S. marshals brought the release of emotions that had been building for weeks. The release took the form of rioting that began about 9:30 that night. The Oxford unit of the National Guard, federalized by President Kennedy, was the first to arrive on campus, arriving about 11:00 p.m. We watched the beginning of rioting on the 11:00 o'clock television news. Several students were studying in the Westminster Fellowship Center. My family and I lived in the other half of the building. The students were concerned about returning to the campus. I encouraged them to spend the night at the center, suggesting that they lock the doors. Not sure of what was happening on campus, we went to bed and slept fitfully. I woke shortly after first light when I heard footsteps running on the driveway that went across the property from one street to the other. I hurried into the student center to make sure the door was locked. I saw several national guardsmen chasing the rioters whom I had heard running across the drive. There was a large picture window, so I was in full view. One guardsman called, 'There's one of them in there.' Evidently, they noticed I was in pajamas and was not a rioter . . . so they proceeded on.
>
> A little before 8:00 o'clock, a plumber arrived to work under the house. He realized he had forgotten a needed tool and left to return to the shop for it. It was 12 days before he returned to work. Police check points had been set up along University Avenue, and he wasn't allowed back in.
>
> A young African American woman had been helping us since the twins were born. She phoned to explain that she had tried to come to work, but the soldiers would not let her. 'They say I can't go there today . . . I should go home and stay there.'

Evidently Murphey and his family had left during the night when the riot started spilling off the campus and down toward town. The Wilds lived on that street. I say evidently because the president of the Women of the Church called me on the phone asking where he was. She wanted to know what to do about the meeting of the women that was scheduled at the church at 10:00 that morning. I made the decision to call it off . . . not knowing the full extent of the situation. I reasoned that, even if it might be safe to move around the community, with all the turmoil and confusion, the purpose of the meeting could not possibly be fulfilled. The decision was providential because during the time of the intended meeting, the soldiers had chased several rioters through the church.

A humorous moment came four or five days later when Murphey drove to the campus for some responsibility. The military was searching every car. Murphey assured them he had no weapons. But when they searched, they found three or four large stones under the driver's seat that Murphey's ten-year-old son Scott had secreted there on their summer vacation out West. Scott had been collecting rocks. Murphey had said 'Enough,' but Scott had added a few more and then forgotten about them when they unloaded the car. Murphey was able to explain the situation sufficiently and was not taken into custody.

As time passed, after the New Year, and the 101st Airborne, now reduced to a force of about 100, moved from the airport in tents to the National Guard Armory, the chaplain assigned was a member of St. Andrew Presbytery and a friend of mine, and I went down to visit him. He asked me to preach at the weekly worship service. A few days later, my friend paid a brief visit at my study, parking his jeep in front. As soon as he left, the phone began to ring. What had I done? Was I in trouble? What was happening? I had mistakenly thought that things had settled more than they had. I assured those who called that I had had a visit from a friend, a member of our presbytery who happened to be the chaplain assigned here.

Meredith had enough credits to transfer in, that he could graduate at the end of the summer session. I was asked to give the invocation for the ceremony. It was a hot summer afternoon. Chancellor Williams was on edge. His prime goal was to conclude the program as quickly as possible. He was waving his hand and repeating under his breath, 'Hurry up, dean. Hurry up.' While the diplomas were being handed out, flash bulbs were going off repeatedly. Not only were there the usual parents with cameras, but the press was there in force. The Chancellor mistook the flashes for lightning and jumped into high gear, 'Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up.' Graduation was completed in record time. There were no incidents. James Meredith had graduated and that episode in the history of the university was completed.[733]

Segregationists Sought to Close Ole Miss

Some were so completely opposed to integration that they preferred that the University of Mississippi be closed rather than operate as a desegregated institution. These persons hoped to emulate the example of Prince Edward County in Virginia, which shut down its public schools from 1959 to 1964 rather than face integration. Throughout the fall, agitation on the Ole Miss campus continued. Cliff McKay remembered that, "As the fall wore on, a pattern developed. The majority of students left for home Friday afternoons. There would be disturbances on Sunday night, again on Monday, tapering off on Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday were for the most part quiet. Students went home on Friday and the cycle repeated itself when they arrived back on campus Sunday afternoon." Professor Silver wrote to his daughter that the "chief desire now of the extremists is not to get Meredith but to provoke an incident [that] Barnett would use to close the school." The possibility that the school might be closed was real.[734]

[733] Clifford McKay Jr. to R. Milton Winter, October 13-14, 2014.

[734] Clifford McKay Jr. to R. Milton Winter, October 13-14, 2014, October 16, 2014.

Alton Bryant Was Leader in Effort to Maintain University's Accreditation

With rioting and continued unrest, the University of Mississippi faced possible loss of accreditation as calls came from leading academicians across the country to punish the administrators and board members who had acquiesced to Governor Barnett's political interference. Vice-Chancellor W. Alton Bryant broke the administration's silence in a speech at Forest on October 22. He reviewed the university's many achievements, then pointed to the danger it currently faced, saying, "However much we may disagree with court decisions, we must school ourselves and our children to obey the law and assure that future riots and bloodshed will not occur." He urged that the educational system could be saved, "by taking a calm and sensible view of our problems" and by bringing "the best features of the Mississippi Way of Life into full flower: A way of life filled with respect and pride for the graciousness, the hospitality, the honesty, and the courage of our past; a way of life that looks forward to a greater tolerance, a greater justice, a greater prosperity than we have ever known."[735]

Speaking again in Jackson on November 8, Bryant gave credit to the great majority of students at Ole Miss but charged that a disruptive minority was receiving material support and instructions from "adult agitators" who preferred to remain "faceless and nameless." He stated that these "moral and physical cowards" were using students as "pawns" in order to force the closing of the university and the ruin of other public colleges. He urged responsible citizens to take steps to ensure "order and sanity" in the state's educational system. He appealed to his hearers to support the university and to oppose any effort to close the school.[736] Still, the university continued to face the danger of losing its accreditation because of the way the state's politicians were continuing to exploit the situation. Bryant and other college administrators negotiated a compromise whereby the university was placed under "close observation" by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This would be maintained until the association's December 1963 annual meeting, at which time the university's status would be reviewed.

Outcry Follows Wilds' Address to Idlewild Men

On December 3, at the invitation of Conrad Seabrook, an elder in the Idlewild Presbyterian Church of Memphis and president of Idlewild's Men of the Church, Murphey Wilds gave an address, giving his assessment of the situation then unfolding in Mississippi. The church's pastor since 1954, the Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, was a son of the First Presbyterian Church in Corinth, Mississippi, and a progressive leader in the city and its Presbyterian affairs. Wilds had served as Jones's assistant pastor (1949-1951) in High Point, North Carolina. The Rev. John K. Johnson, a former pastor of the Oxford Church and also a man of progressive racial views, was Idlewild Church's associate pastor. As a native Mississippian and having served two pastorates in the state, Jones took interest in the state's civil rights struggles and, on several occasions, defended those who worked for racial justice during the tumultuous 1960s. By inviting Murphey Wilds to address the Men's Club of the large Memphis church, knowing that there would be extensive coverage in the two widely circulated daily newspapers, Jones and the Idlewild Church leadership assured that a bright light would be focused on the needs in Mississippi just then.

After discussing events leading to the Oxford riots, Wilds placed responsibility on the White Citizens' Council headed by W. J. Simmons. Wilds said the White Citizens' Council was the strongest group in Mississippi, alleging that "It holds a firm grip on Gov. Ross Barnett." He charged that, "The president of the state-wide council, W. J. Simmons, was with the Governor constantly through the Meredith crisis, and it is common knowledge that the Governor's actions were not so much his own as those of the Council." He went on to say that "The matter of freedom of the pulpit was involved here. Some ministers who would not go along with this, who presented the other side, were pressured out of the pulpits they held." He added that the Mississippi ministry as a whole had supported segregation. "The church in Mississippi has said that segregation is the Christian way." Countering the argument that the basic issue was states' rights, he said, "I am not naïve enough to go along with this. Had the

[735] Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 189.

[736] *Clarion-Ledger* (November 9, 1962); Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 197-98.

claims for states' rights been litigated on any other basis than that of integration, there would have been far, far less reaction and interest." Wilds said that the hard core of those involved in the mob violence on the campus came at the invitation of Governor Barnett. "Students were involved, too, but there were several times when it seemed the students would have withdrawn had it not been for this hard core of outsiders who kept the battle going."

According to Wilds's report, the Oxford ministers had attempted to prevent the riots. "We urged from our pulpits for all to act only in ways which would recognize the Christian idea of the worth of an individual, to attempt to create an atmosphere of peace, and to act in a manner which would promote law and order." He believed it was the theological part of their call that provoked the most strident opposition. "Mississippians could not recognize the fact that individuals are part of society, and that we are judged as such, as well as individuals. Perhaps this is an emphasis which has been lacking throughout our church and others." Wilds believed Mississippians needed to elect "responsible officials" to public office. "We need men who are uncontrolled by any one pressure group, men of high character and purpose." He felt that one discouraging element in Mississippi was the failure of the electorate to do this. "When will it be possible for us to have officials, who do not follow the same old line of the past?" he asked.

Wilds credited the Memphis newspapers with giving accurate information. He said that only citizens in North Mississippi had received accurate accounts of the Oxford crisis, "because they read the Memphis papers." He blamed the Jackson papers for distorting the situation. He concluded by saying that there were rays of hope in Mississippi. "More responsible people are beginning to speak."[737] Wilds' speech received wide publicity. In response to it, he received a good deal of anonymous hate mail. Significantly, however, no outright criticism came from the citizens of Oxford or members of the Oxford Presbyterian Church.

Oxford Church Session Adopts Statement Affirming Freedom of the Pulpit

The Oxford Church session followed matters closely, and on February 11, 1963, it unanimously ratified a statement on the freedom of the pulpit, prepared at the body's request by elders Will Lewis Sr., Victor A. Coulter, and Thomas R. Ethridge. It said,

> The *Confession of Faith* indicates that a minister should speak in accordance with the 'whole counsel of God' [Acts 20:27], thus his preaching must proclaim the relevance of our faith for everyday living.
>
> *The Book of Church Order* imposes upon the minister, in his ordination vows, the promise 'to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity and the peace of the church' and upon the congregation the charge 'to assist his endeavors for their instruction and spiritual edification.'
>
> Nowhere in these guides or in the Scripture itself is there to be found any justification for binding the conscience of either the minister or the layman. There must be both freedom of the pulpit and freedom of the pew. As stated in the *Confession of Faith*, 'God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His word.' [Chapter XXII, section ii]
>
> The scriptures, the *Book of Church Order* and the *Confession of Faith* do not allow dictation by the session or by the congregation as to how an ordained minister shall interpret the teaching of the Bible or speak at any time concerning the application to the lives of men; it is his duty and responsibility to interpret and teach scripture as he understands it, feeling the burden of the Lord upon his heart and the guidance of the Holy Spirit on his actions. He speaks for God, as God's servant and representative, not as a spokesman for a church. If the question is raised as to whether his teaching is out of harmony with the Bible and other standards of the Church, such question should be submitted to the presbytery of which he is a member in accordance with the provisions of *The Book of Church Order*.

[737] See George Lapides, "Pulpit 'Used' Says Oxford Clergyman: Attacks 'Control by Citizens' Council," *Memphis Press-Scimitar* (December 4, 1962): A1, 3.

> Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED BY THE SESSION OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, that it completely endorses the principle that ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States should be free, in and out of their pulpits, [in the] application [of scripture's teaching] to everyday life as they interpret it, and that ministers in exercising such freedom should be governed only by their understanding from God and the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

In taking this action, the Oxford elders stood almost alone among the Presbyterians of the state. Few, if any, other churches spoke out to affirm their ministers' right to preach as they believed themselves led by God—even if their teaching proved hard to hear or accept.

William Winter Addresses Events at Ole Miss

Against the background of events in Oxford, state treasurer and Presbyterian elder William F. Winter wrote that most "thinking Mississippians" could not "earnestly and sincerely condone what has happened." He hoped that after Meredith's admission to the university, "a more moderate approach" would be adopted within the state, "in the pattern of most other Southern states, which have already experienced some of these adjustments." Although he felt that the voices of moderation were "relatively weak," he was certain that "men who previously kept their silence now are beginning to face facts and to say some things that it was impossible to say before."[738]

On March 27, 1963, Winter gave an address entitled, "The Problems of Southern Politics," at All Saints' Junior College, a Vicksburg school associated with the Episcopal Church. He said,

> Other solutions must be found for the ever-present problems of race relations than the bullwhip and the shotgun. It is my observation that very few mobs ever spontaneously and automatically form. But regardless of what motivates unthinking men to take the law into their own hands, it is the clear and unmistakable duty of Southern politicians to see to it that it does not happen. And this duty extends not just to the dispersal of mobs once they have formed but to the deliberate and calculated avoidance of any statements or actions that would lend to incite their formation in the first place.
>
> Our political leadership must appeal to the best that is in us—not to the worst, to our higher selves not our baser instincts. Only in this way can our section diminish some of the tensions that have already caused us so much grief and even now threaten more. This is no time to be drinking from the wells of bitterness and recrimination. The political leader who can successfully turn his people from a preoccupation with the race issue and all of the supercharged emotions of anxiety, fear, and hate that issue suggests, will, in my opinion, have served well the cause of Southern statesmanship and helped to put his region on the road to a happier and better day.[739]

Other Denominations Respond to Ole Miss Crisis

Mississippi Presbyterians had few outright social liberals in their ranks during the 1960s, but as Mark Newman, who studied religious attitudes toward desegregation in Mississippi has written, "The Ole Miss crisis marked the beginning of a split in segregationist ranks between hardliners committed to segregation at any price and those who would not support segregation at the cost of violence, lawlessness, and the educational system."

Newman believed that "The best that can be said of Mississippi Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians is that

[738] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New* Mississippi, 117.

[739] Excerpted from Andrew P. Mullins Jr., *The Measure of Our Days: Writings of William F. Winter*, 92. In 1999, the William F. Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation was established at the University of Mississippi and named in the former governor's honor.

they did not support massive resistance to desegregation, such as advocated by the Ku Klux Klan and Governor Barnett, and in this respect cannot be said to have simply followed popular sentiment." In this respect, the state's majority-white churches—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal—by and large followed a middle course, albeit at times timidly.

Through statements of their presbyteries, Mississippi Presbyterians rejected violent and illegal opposition to civil rights, but opposed marches, protests, and other strident efforts to achieve integration.[740]

After the Oxford riots, the Mississippi Baptist Convention defeated a series of resolutions that sought to reaffirm "our intelligent good will toward all men," calling upon Christians to pray "that we may live consistent with Christian citizenship." A Grenada minister spoke against the resolutions on the ground that they might be open to all sorts of interpretations. By contrast, a Southern Baptist missionary who identified herself as a second cousin of Governor Barnett wrote from Nigeria to *The Baptist Record*, the Southern Baptist state newspaper, that Mississippians were making her work more difficult. "You send us out here to preach that Christ died for all men. Then you make a travesty of our message by refusing to associate with some of them because of the color of their skin. You are supposed to be holding the lifelines for us, and you are twisting them into a noose of racism to strangle our message." She said, "Communists do not need to work against the preaching of the Gospel here; you are doing it quite adequately." Before the Oxford riots, Billy Graham had cabled Governor Barnett from South America, urging caution, but the message was not reported in the press.[741]

Two months after the Oxford riots, *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* observed that the contest had shifted to "the one battlefield that counts most: The fight for men's minds." Some paid dearly for speaking out. Others, such as University of Mississippi professor James W. Silver, left the state. Two years later, Silver, who had taught at the University of Mississippi for 27 years, published a widely noted book called *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, in which he asserted that Mississippi was a "closed society," and wondered if its religious institutions were universal or parochial in their sentiments and aims. Silver wrote that, "Mississippians torture the Scriptures into sacred sanction for inequality and inhumanity," and that despite courageous stands made by individual ministers, "The Church as a whole has placed its banner with the status quo."[742]

With the passing of time, Silver's judgments were accepted by many Mississippians, and in a subsequent volume, entitled *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi*, published in 1984 by the Mississippi University Press, he described white Mississippians of the 1960s as "a proud religious people," who would not respond to "being told with increasing shrillness by outsiders that what three generations had accepted as historical truth was so much mythology." He explained that "Separation of the races and absolute control of every facet of society by the whites—universally assumed to be not only constitutional but the work of God—were not to be challenged from within as evil and immoral." His evaluation of the state's religious leadership was negative. A former Methodist, Silver said that he "had a low opinion of the role the Church had played in Mississippi and held out little hope that change would come from that direction."[743]

Mississippi Council on Human Relations Formed

In this era, there were few, if any, settings in which African American and white leaders could meet for discussion of concerns. Segregationists held that to meet with African Americans implied social equality and applied pressure to prevent such forums from being organized. Despite great odds, some ministers tried to work for reconciliation and understanding. One way that several pursued was the establishment of biracial committees

[740] Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: The Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004): 12, 8-9, 16.

[741] James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 54-55.

[742] *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (December 16, 1962); Charles W. Eagles, "The Fight for Men's Minds:" The Aftermath of the Ole Miss Riot of 1962, *Journal of Mississippi History* 71 (Spring 2009): 7; Silver, 53.

[743] Claude Sitton, "Southern Dissenter," *New York Times* (November 8, 1963): 19; James W. Silver, *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984): 136.

to discuss common concern, to give moderate African American leaders a forum to lay their concerns before the dominant white leadership. In spite of segregationist opposition, an effort was made in the autumn of 1962 to establish better race relations through a biracial committee called the Mississippi Council on Human Relations. This was initiated by such people as Dr. A. D. Beittel, Tougaloo College's white president. The council initially went forward with both Catholic and Jewish support. The effort was slowed when some of the state's moderate white church leaders panicked and retreated after being attacked verbally by the Citizens' Council. Tougaloo, located five miles north of Jackson, was affiliated with the United Church of Christ, a Reformed body whose strength was primarily in New England and the Midwest. Tougaloo was the center of many civil rights activities.[744]

Alabama Events Presage Civil Rights Struggles in Mississippi

In April 1963, a 19-year-old African American woman named Dorothy Bell was arrested in Birmingham for sitting at a whites-only lunch counter. Tensions mounted in the Alabama steel town as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led protesters into the business district. Beginning the week of May 3, Birmingham police began the tactic of using attack dogs on protesters, and by the eighth, enlisted the help of fire-fighters and their hoses to discourage anyone on the streets from assembling in the name of civil rights. The bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in the same city on September 15, which killed four young girls and injured 22 others, rallied support for the civil rights cause.

Presbyterians were involved in the Birmingham protests in an ironic way, as the Rev. Edward V. Ramage, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, joined seven clergy colleagues in a public statement urging King and other civil rights activists to show restraint, fearing that street demonstrations would lead to violence. Three months earlier, following Governor George Wallace's inaugural speech that called for "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," they had made a stand in support of the dignity of all people. Harassment and death threats had followed. King used their later appeal for moderation and a gradualist approach as the occasion to issue his April 16, 1963, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," in which he wrote that passivity in the face of continued injustice represented a hopeless compromise. Still, having raised their profile as moderates, Ramage and the others had angered conservatives, and most of the ministers were forced from their pulpits. King's consternation as well as the dilemma of the white moderate ministers with their congregations showed how difficult the situation was and how carefully all had to proceed if any progress was possible for those who sought to make their case by means of moral suasion.[745]

Mississippi Jewish Leaders Targeted

White racist hatred for African Americans also extended to Jews. Threats came to Rabbi Charles Mantinband, who served the Hebrew temple in Hattiesburg due to his support for the Mississippi Council of Human Relations, especially those who worked for racial justice. A board member of the Southern Regional Council and the Mississippi Council of Human Relations, Mantinband wrote that "Life can be very placid and gracious in this part of the country—if one runs with the herd." The South is turbulent and sullen and sometimes noisy, but there is a conspiracy of silence in respectable middle-class society. In 1958, while Mantinband was abroad, White Citizens' Council leaders urged the congregation to dismiss him. The congregation stood by him. He tried to make his points with wisdom and subtle humor, but over time, his distress increased. He wrote that, "The time is passed when a Jew dare be neutral."[746] On Washington's Birthday in 1963, Mantinband wrote that "The 'why'

[744] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 173.

[745] Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Eight White Religious Leaders and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail."*

[746] Howard Ball, *Taking the Fight South: Chronicle of a Jew's Battle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021).

of Mississippi is anybody's guess. I suspect we are lacking in courage and in true spirituality. Some of us are very lonely." Four months later, he moved to Texas.[747]

Rabbi Moses M. Landau, of Temple Adath Israel in Cleveland from 1957 until the 1990s believed that Southern Jews benefitted from segregation. He said that "If you are going to take sides and agitate, you accomplish nothing, except the hostility of the [white] people." He believed, that "with the prevailing segregationist mentality, the Jewish community could not exist, if they were in any way involved in the civil rights movement." Other rabbis, such as Clarksdale's Benjamin Shultz, spoke out on behalf of segregation. Rabbi Shultz told a Clarksdale men's civic club in 1962 that, "What America needs is more Mississippi, not less."[748]

Further Violence in Mississippi

In the spring of 1963, violence came to the Mississippi Delta when Jimmy Travis, a former Tougaloo student who had become a civil rights worker, was shot in the neck and nearly killed. More night-rider attacks followed, but an aroused African American community attended mass meetings and attempted to register to vote.[749]

In Jackson, on May 28, civil rights workers who staged a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter on Capitol Street in the heart of the business district were harassed by angry whites who poured sugar, ketchup, and mustard on the heads of the activists who endured the abuse without reaction. Photographs were published throughout the nation.[750]

On the night of June 12, returning home from a late-night meeting, state NAACP leader Medgar Evers was shot as he stepped out of his automobile in his carport. A segregationist named Byron de la Beckwith was arrested by the FBI and charged with Evers' murder. He was prosecuted by district attorney and future governor William L. Waller, but two trials conducted at the time ended with hung juries.

In spite of pleas from area ministers, Jackson mayor Allen Thompson, a member of Galloway Methodist Church, stubbornly refused to set up a biracial negotiating committee. Meanwhile, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington went forth with much Presbyterian support from across the country. King delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, in the presence of 200,000 listeners. Clearly, support for civil rights was growing across the nation.

"Born of Conviction" Statement Issued by Mississippi Methodist Ministers

There were few congregations such as the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford, where the session had resolved in 1954, following the Supreme Court's school desegregation ruling, that the church doors should be open to all races. Ministers and priests who spoke out for racial justice, such as Murphey Wilds, Clifford McKay, Robert Walkup, Duncan Gray, as well as others mentioned in this history, were rare voices amid the orthodoxy of segregation.

The strongest Methodist voice for change in Mississippi up to this point had been the Rev. W. B. Selah, pastor of Galloway Memorial Church in Jackson since 1953, then the largest Methodist congregation in the state. His sermon calling for racial understanding, originally delivered in November 1961, after the church had closed its doors to African American visitors, was widely disseminated in abridged form by the Associated Press in January 1963. Published on the front page of *The Clarion-Ledger*, the sermon was followed a week later, on January 2, by a declaration entitled "Born of Conviction," signed by 28 young Methodist pastors—all native

[747] Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007): 213-29.

[748] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 57-58; Bauman and Kalin, *The Quiet Voices*, 72-73, 76; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987): 96.

[749] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 174.

[750] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 176.

Mississippians—serving around the state. The statement by the pastors was published in the weekly *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*. It stressed freedom of the pulpit, affirmed faith in the brotherhood of all mankind, condemned racial discrimination, and supported public schools as "essential to the preservation and development of our true democracy." As a storm of controversy broke over their heads, 23 other Methodist ministers endorsed the statement.[751]

One signer of the "Born of Conviction" statement was the Rev. Jerry Furr, W. B. Selah's associate pastor in Galloway Methodist Church. Another was Selah's son-in-law, the Rev. Gerald Trigg, a recent graduate of Vanderbilt Divinity School, who was pastor of a small Methodist congregation in Pascagoula. Trigg had publicly debated Myers Lowman, in a highly publicized confrontation sponsored by the State Sovereignty Commission, on July 20, 1962, at Jackson's King Edward Hotel. Lowman had been engaged by the State Sovereignty Commission to travel throughout the state alerting hearers to the dangers of Communism in the churches. He had issued a challenge to any minister who wished to dispute his allegation that communists were stirring up the current civil rights unrest in the state. Lowman had already spoken at all the state's senior colleges and was then slated to address the junior colleges. Trigg had answered the challenge to debate after no minister of greater stature or experience would volunteer. He acquitted himself well before a gathering of about 300 people, and Lowman issued no more challenges to debate ministers.[752]

Bishop Marvin Franklin withheld approval for the 28 and their positions, though the lay leader of the Mississippi Conference praised the statement as "worthwhile," as did the associate lay leader, who criticized "a climate of fear and hatred, created by pressure groups."[753]

Few others rose to support the young pastors. The Associated Press asked Selah for an interview. He agreed on condition that his remarks also be published in *The Clarion-Ledger*, which, with *The Jackson Daily News* had been highly critical of the young ministers. His statement, following the outline of his November sermon, said that "We must seek for all men, Black and white, the same justice, the same rights, and the same opportunities that we seek for ourselves. Nothing less than this is Christian love. To discriminate against a man because of his color . . . is contrary to the will of God. Forced segregation is wrong. There can be no color bar in a Christian church. Race prejudice is a denial of Christian brotherhood." Selah said, "For 17 years I have preached the law of Christian love from the pulpit of Galloway Methodist Church. This law means that…we should voluntarily desegregate all public facilities." Selah threw his support behind the public school system even as private schools were being organized across the South to thwart integration. The interview was published on January 7 in *The Clarion-Ledger*, as well as papers across the nation. His remarks were daring and did not bode well for his future ministry in Mississippi. No other white Mississippi pastor of the period was as outspoken.

One week later, Galloway Church's official board considered a resolution, which stated that,

> With full and complete confidence in the integrity of the opinion of the pastors of Galloway Memorial Methodist Church and with high appreciation for their Christian leadership throughout the years of their ministry, the Official Board of the Church, in the spirit of love and good will, feels impelled to make the following statement:
>
> 1. The recently published statements by the pastors of this church are their personal opinions and not necessarily the views of the individual members of this church.

[751] "Born of Conviction," *Mississippi Methodist Advocate* (January 2, 1963): 2; See Joe T. Reiff, *Born of Conviction: White Methodists and Mississippi's Closed Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Peter C. Murray, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

[752] W. J. Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway: One Church's Struggle with Social Change* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980): 7-8.

[753] Joe T. Reiff, "Conflicting Convictions in White Mississippi Methodism: The 1963 'Born of Conviction' Controversy," *Methodist History* 49 (April 2011): 162-75.

2. It is not un-Christian that we prefer to remain an all-white congregation. The practice of the separation of the races in Galloway Memorial Methodist Church is a time-honored tradition. We earnestly hope that the perpetuation of that tradition will never be impaired.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 184 to 13.[754]

This statement went further than the church's 1961 position, now claiming that "It is not unChristian that we prefer to remain an all-white congregation." The board acknowledged that it was on dubious ground, however, prefacing their statement as follows: "Although we recognize that this is not what Jesus Christ would do, nevertheless. . . ."[755]

Word of the Galloway board's action was published the following day in *The Clarion-Ledger* under the headline, "Galloway Board Issues Statement on Ministers." That same day, *The Jackson Daily News* alerted readers to a new threat to segregation. Under a headline, "Church Groups Urge Militant Mixing," the paper carried articles about pronouncements of the National Conference on Religion and Race then underway in Chicago. A reporter stated that the conference proposed "to galvanize America's religious bodies . . . against segregation, discrimination, and prejudice in all areas of life." The next day, the paper reported on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech to the conference. The article was titled, "Church Mix Drive Pleasing to King."[756]

To enforce the Galloway board's resolution, men of the church began standing guard at entrances to the church on Sunday mornings. Side and rear doors were locked, so that entry was possible only through the main front doors. This action attracted the curious, and the city dispatched a paddy wagon, along with a uniformed policeman who carried a billy club.[757]

Many of those who signed the "Born of Conviction" statement received threats. Within a year, over half of the signers had transferred out of Mississippi—a most unusual phenomenon as Methodist clergy then spent their entire ministries in the conferences where they were ordained. However, between 1959 and 1964, 79 ministers transferred out of the Mississippi Conference. The transfers represented a serious loss. Young Methodist ministers requested transfers out of Mississippi in such numbers that Bishop Marvin Franklin appointed a commission to investigate the causes of this exodus.[758]

PCUS Assembly Commissions New Study on Race Relations

As controversy swirled around Mississippi, the Methodist "Born of Conviction" document received national notice, including an article in *The Presbyterian Outlook* entitled, "Mississippi Methodists Lead in Attack on Segregation." The actions of Dr. Selah, as well as the Oxford ministers, doubtless gave the young ministers courage. The 1962 PCUS Assembly had instructed its Permanent Committee on Christian Relations "to study areas of tension existing among the races in areas served by our church, including higher education." It declared that the body's failure in recent years to present for discussion anything in regard to racial matters had been a failure to face "the facts of life" in the South.[759] The courageous work of Presbyterians in the progressive congregations of St. Andrew Presbytery was beginning to bear fruit.

By the summer of 1963, many white Mississippi Presbyterians felt under assault on all fronts. Segregationists had seen the University of Mississippi forcibly integrated. Theological conservatives believed the Church's commitment to scriptural authority was weakening in favor of social policies they said the PCUS was not called to address. But African Americans, both within and beyond the PCUS, believed they were being treated unequally

[754] "Galloway Board Issues Statement on Ministers," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (January 15, 1963): 1, 6.

[755] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 5-6; *God's Long Summer*, 128-30.

[756] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 64.

[757] Cunningham, *Agony at* Galloway, 13-15.

[758] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 237; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 64.

[759] *Presbyterian Outlook* 145 (January 21, 1963); *Presbyterian Survey* 52 (July 1962): 15.

on the basis of color. In Mississippi, African American churches were being set on fire, and students who came to help Blacks gain their civil rights were being attacked, arrested, and murdered by a Ku Klux Klan that often operated with the knowledge, consent, and even the assistance of duly sworn officers of the law. In the wake of violence against peaceful demonstrators that had taken place in April 1963 under Birmingham police chief Eugene "Bull" Connor and the Rev. Martin Luther King's "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," and in obedience to the charge given it by the preceding year's General Assembly, the Permanent PCUS Committee on Christian Relations sought to address the matter, as it presented a statement on "The Relationship between the Races in the Area Served by the Presbyterian Church, U. S.," with recommendations to the 1963 Assembly, meeting in Huntington, West Virginia.

The committee reminded the Assembly of its 1954 affirmation that, "Enforced segregation of the races is discrimination which is out of harmony with Christian theology and ethics; and that the Church, in its relationship to cultural patterns should lead and not follow." It also quoted the 1954 Assembly's admonition in the light of the recent U. S. Supreme Court ruling concerning school desegregation that "the Assembly commends the principle of the decision and urges all members of our churches to consider thoughtfully and prayerfully the complete solution of the problem involved. It also urges all our people to lend their assistance to those charged with the duty of implementing the decision, and to remember that appeals to racial prejudice will not help but hinder the accomplishment of this aim." The 1963 committee stated that, since 1954 subsequent General Assemblies had not wavered position, but had repeatedly endorsed it, so that it considered the idea of segregation no longer as an option, but instead viewed integration as the way forward, so that the questions for discussion were simply "how soon, and by what methods."

The committee reported that by its general observation, some progress in the desegregation of the churches and church institutions had been made, "however, meager and slow." It noted that all five of its seminaries, as well as the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, were integrated, "with full privileges offered Negro students." Of the church's 23 colleges, 11 had indicated publicly that there were no longer any barriers to entrance and full collegiate privileges based on race. In response to a questionnaire sent out by the committee and answered on a voluntary basis, 629 sessions indicated that they had taken action based on the *Westminster Confession's* declaration (Chapter XXVIII, section ii) that the communion of the Church "is that extended to all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus," concerning seating or reception of African Americans, whereas 485 had not. Fifty-seven congregations reported that African American persons regularly attended, with 1,031 reporting that they did not. Forty-two congregations reported that they had received African American members, but only 61 sessions indicated that their congregations had made any effort to reach African Americans or other non-whites for membership in their church.

Based on such statistics, the committee concluded that, "Unfortunately, many white South-erners have not willingly relinquished the relationship of paternalism and the system of segregation. The Negro has achieved most of his present rights and privileges through litigation, freedom rides, boycotts, sit-ins, kneel-ins, picketing, prayer walks and vigils, massive voter registrations and other non-violent means of resistance or initiative. The adverse results of the Negro's insistence upon his rights have been the destruction of property, burning of churches, imprisonment of hundreds, shutdown of schools, severe economic loss, beatings, and death. In terms of the relationship between the two races there is very little communication but much distrust and contempt." The report continued, "There was a time when the Negro would not assert himself, relying upon certain sympathetic white people to intercede on his behalf. That time is past. The leadership for racial justice has been taken over by the Negroes who refuse to wait for small gratuities from the white man.

Furthermore, it is the young Negro, frequently of college age, who takes charge, impatient with the deliberateness of his elders. Because of the many instances of peaceful demonstrations on the part of the young, both the judicial and executive branches of government have been forced to act quickly and decisively. These young men and women may profess Christianity, may meet in churches to discuss their strategy, and may use Christian symbols, but it is not primarily to the Christian conscience of the white people that they make their most effective appeal. It is in the area of economics that they find the white man most vulnerable, and it is here that they find him willing to

come to terms." Finally, the committee observed that "the Church has the reputation of being a bulwark among major institutions practicing segregation, in spite of its profession of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. . . . This racial policy, supported neither by our theology or our scripture, is reflecting disrespect upon those churches that condone it." The committee believed that the maintenance of such policies resulted in the special disapproval of younger church members.

As it drew near to a set of recommendations, the committee observed that, "Forthright statements have been made by our church through its higher courts but they become weaker the nearer they draw to the point of practical application. In time of racial crisis, local sessions, ministers, and even presbyteries have generally been silent or if speaking at all have only counseled against violence and in favor of law and order. In the face of crisis our churches practice insularity which they have mistaken for spirituality. They have sacrificed the forthrightness of the gospel for the peace of the congregation, preferring local unities to community solidarity of the human race. The churches are intact, but the gospel has been distort. . . . Our default of leadership in this time of racial strife has been one of the grave disappointments of 20th century Christendom."

The committee recommended that the Assembly reaffirm the affirmations originally made by the 1954 Assembly, and that all church institutions—colleges, children's homes, homes for the aged, and conference centers—abolish racial barriers, that Presbyterian church leaders seek to establish better communication and relations of mutual trust in their communities, and that Presbyterians seek to uphold the efforts of those who sought to uphold the law and keep the peace. It reminded hearers that "this report is not mandatory but pastoral and prophetic in character," and urged that it "be studied in local churches and its subject matter . . . discussed freely, vigorously, and affectionately; thereby opening minds to the promptings of God's Spirit, who is able to unite in Christ people of every temperament and every persuasion."[760]

Needless to say, the Assembly's advice on racial relations did not meet with segregationist approval. As E. T. Thompson has written, "The most stubborn resistance to the desegregation ideal of the Assembly was found in local churches. Not all by any means. . . . In the vast majority of churches no question arose. A few had been quick to record their disagreement with the Assembly's position. And in a very large number of churches, particularly in the South but in other states as well, the minister [had to] be very cautious indeed in what he said about race if he did not wish to terminate his pastorate.[761]

In 1962-1963, 1,178 churches replied to a questionnaire sent to them by the Permanent Committee on Christian Relations. Six hundred twenty-three replied that Blacks were welcome, but 295 indicated they were not. The import of the Assembly's recommendations for Mississippi was obvious, though the situation in the Magnolia State was by no means the only one where the admonitions applied. Conservatives took issue with the use of language using the idea of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, which they believed to be unscriptural. Conservatives also believed that the invocation of the solidarity of the human race was secondary to the idea of solidarity among those found in Christ. The fact that most African Americans in the American South were Christian, and some Presbyterian, did not seem to segregationists to imply that some or all might wish to worship and work together in the organizational bonds of congregations and presbyteries.

1963-1964 Jackson Church Visit Campaign Shined National Spotlight on Mississippi Segregated Racial Seating Policies

Rhodes College professor Stephen Haynes has written that, "Nowhere were the spectacular aspects of the kneel-in more prominently on display than in Jackson, Mississippi, and the Kentucky scholar Carolyn Renée Dupont has said further that, "During the civil rights crisis of the 1960s, when attempts were made to integrate the worship of white-controlled congregations, many enacted policies forbidding inter-racial worship, and Black persons and whites who sought to attend with them were turned away, sometimes with violent shoving and arrest

[760] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1963): 1:154-57; cf. Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 1: 187-98.
[761] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:547, 549.

by the police. Mississippi's once-placid religious communities transmogrified into civil rights battlegrounds."[762] The higher assemblies of the national religious denominations as well as their ecumenical organizations had given tepid support to the idea of African American equality, but the church visits in Jackson called forth their interest and involvement as never before. Attempts by Black and mixed African American and white groups to attend services in the churches of Jackson came in the wake of a series of incidents in which sometimes-integrated small groups of church people were blocked from attending services at numerous, white-controlled churches in Birmingham during Holy Week in 1963. Similar attempts had also been rebuffed in Atlanta.

The Rev. Edwin King, a white Methodist minister serving as chaplain at Tougaloo College, a small historically Black institution on the north side of Jackson, believed that the hypocrisy he saw on display in Birmingham's churches would not be lost even on white, segregationist Christians in Mississippi. King believed that the symbolic possibilities of the church visits could make a significant impact in Mississippi. As Charles Marsh described it, "His strategy in the months leading up to the summer of 1964 was to crack the church's closed doors in the hopes that a breakthrough would shake the foundations of the state's public institutions, social practices, and political establishment. He hoped that opening up of the closed doors would inspire, in turn, the opening up of the closed society. King said, 'If white moderates, stirred by a Christian conscience that had been pricked at one of their few vulnerable points, began to support any kind of change in racial patterns in Jackson, even (or perhaps, especially) at the Church—then the door was open, not just the church door, but the door to the possibilities of moderate, gradual change in all Mississippi."[763]

King hoped, in particular, that by approaching the doors of white churches, their pastors and lay leaders might be moved to meet with the visitors and hear their concerns. This might be one, small way to open fruitful conversation between African Americans and the white power structure.[764] Yet, mixed-race groups who visited Mississippi churches that summer were turned away because whites said that they had not come "in sincerity" or "to worship."

Faith Leaders Attempt Inter-Racial Dialogue

Civil rights leaders concluded that direct action was the only way forward. Mass demonstrations for civil rights had begun in Jackson in May 1961 with the arrival of more than 300 "Freedom Riders." They were arrested for disturbing the peace after they disembarked from their interstate busses. Sit-in demonstrations began but were ineffective in securing change. Among the grievances was the refusal of white-owned stores to hire African American clerks or to allow African American customers to try on merchandise in department store fitting rooms. The mayor and white merchants refused to meet with protesters. The demonstrations and sit-ins continued through 1962 into the summer of 1963. The mistreatment of activists who conducted a sit-in at the Woolworth Store's lunch counter on Jackson's Capitol Street occasioned nationwide media coverage. Rather than serve Blacks, nearly all the downtown lunch counters closed down—an action that was followed by drugstores and soda fountains across the state—ironically putting many white employees out of work.

Jackson police arrested over 600 activists for picketing and attempted sit-ins, most of them high school and college students from out of state. The arrestees were kept in temporary holding pens on the state fairgrounds. On the night following the Woolworth sit-in, May 28, the Medgar Evers home was firebombed. A Hinds County judge issued an injunction against future demonstrations or acts of civil disobedience. The order also prohibited an action that had not occurred in Jackson, called "kneel-ins." Individuals were "prohibited from engaging in acts and conduct customarily known as 'kneel-ins' in churches in violation of the wishes and desires of said churches."[765]

After Mayor Thompson rejected a demand put forward by civil rights leaders for a biracial council, Evers

[762] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 15; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 3.

[763] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024).

[764] Ed King, "The Church in Mississippi," cited in *God's Long Summer*, 129-30.

[765] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 86-98.

appealed to the "consciences of many silent, responsible citizens of the white community." In a televised appeal, he expressed his conviction that, "There are white Mississippians who want to go forward on the race question." He appealed to their "sense of justice and fair play," adding that, "Their religion tells them there is something wrong with the old system." Civil rights leaders hoped that "The action of the white church leadership was the one possible force which might still be activated for change in Jackson."[766]

Several white Jackson faith leaders had attempted to meet with their counterparts in the African American community to work for understanding and reconciliation. A few unpublicized meetings between African American and white clergy had been held in 1961 following the first sit-ins but had not gone forward. The following year, the Rev. Edward H. Harrison, rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (now St. Andrew's Cathedral), which was located across from the Governor's Mansion on East Capitol Street in the heart of the business district where the demonstrations were going on, invited a group of African American leaders to the church to discuss possible avenues of reconciliation. This action made him a focal point of suspicion, as there were then almost no venues in the highly segregated Jackson environment where white and African American leaders could discuss mutual concerns. Segregationists felt there should be no discussions, since it was felt that to meet with Black leaders would lend legitimacy to their demands. A few white faith leaders in Jackson had been willing to continue efforts to meet with African American ministers and unknown to the out-of-state civil rights leaders, these white ministers had been making modest, somewhat secretive efforts to bring African American and white representatives together. The discussions were conducted quietly to elude the notice and opposition of city leaders and the Citizens' Council. Among those taking part were Rabbi Perry Nussbaum of Temple Beth Israel, Catholic Bishop Richard Gerow, the Rev. Edward Harrison of St. Andrew's Episcopal, the Rev. Roy Hulan of First Christian, the Rev. W. B. Selah of Galloway Methodist, the Rev. Wade Koons of Trinity Lutheran, and the Rev. J. Moody McDill of Fondren Presbyterian. The meetings took place in the parish house of St. Andrew's Church.

A racial moderate, Harrison had been criticized for defending Episcopal Sunday school lessons that advocated desegregation. He had also administered communion the previous summer to jailed Freedom Riders. He was targeted after a white supremacist forged a telegram purporting to be from Harrison, urging a fiery pro-segregationist Episcopal priest from Texas not to speak before the Jackson White Citizens' Council. The visiting priest's topic was, "Why Integration is Anti-Christian." The telegram was publicized in the local media, and copies were sent to all members of the legislature. Even after the true origin of the telegram was revealed, many demanded Harrison's resignation, and he was hounded from his parish. He resigned in September 1962, just a few weeks before the Meredith crisis in Oxford. Harrison, who had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in the U. S. military, accepted a call to a church in another state.[767]

Following Harrison's resignation, the Rev. Christoph Keller Jr., later elected bishop of Arkansas, was called as rector of St. Andrew's. On September 30, 1962, following the Oxford riots, a solemn service with the reading of the Great Litany was held in St. Andrew's Church. On May 17, 1963, three bishops—Richard Gerow, Marvin Franklin, and Episcopal Bishop John M. Allin—met with Mayor Thompson, offering their assistance as agents of reconciliation. Steps went forward to organize an interracial meeting of clergy, which took place on May 24 at the Farish Street Baptist Church, a historically African American congregation.[768] The May 24 meeting included two Baptist ministers, the Revs. Chester Quarles, executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and William Davis, president of Mississippi Baptist Seminary, an institution white Southern Baptists maintained to educate African American pastors. About 20 African American ministers and other movement leaders were present.

Since Mayor Thompson refused to meet with African American representatives, the white ministers suggested that they could try to convince leaders of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce to serve as mediators. Opposition

[766] See King, "Jackson Movement, Spring, 1963": 64; cited in Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 80-81.

[767] "Telegram Touches Off Charges at Meet Here," *Jackson Daily News* (May 18, 1962); "Council Doubts Telegram Is Sent by Rector," *Jackson Daily News* (June 1, 1962); Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 130-31. An account of the incident identifying the writer of the forged telegram is given in James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 55-57.

[768] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 81, 83, 85.

from the Citizens' Council derailed this proposal, and a meeting with the mayor also proved unproductive, as leaders of the Chamber of Commerce joined the mayor in declaring that they would not negotiate with any who engaged in demonstrations or civil disobedience. Civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham had been met by violence. Hoping to avoid similar violence, Jackson civil rights workers explored other options to achieve better results, as well as to avoid bloodshed. Under prevailing conditions, it did not seem possible for the civil rights workers to contact the white churches privately to ask for assistance. Such efforts in the South had always been ignored by white leaders. The only possible way to gain the notice of the white power structure was through a public approach such as a Sunday church visit and the discussions to which such an encounter might lead. The church visits were seen as one last means for a non-violent encounter, which could spark meaningful discussions.[769]

Civil rights activists had conducted kneel-ins at churches patterned after sit-ins held at lunch counters and other public facilities in several Southern locales since 1960, but these had either involved visits to only a few churches or had not been continued for long periods of time. For example, leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee met in Atlanta in August 1960 and discussed kneel-ins, believing that, "The time has come to awaken the dozing consciences of white Southerners by carrying the problem of segregation to the Church." SNCC leaders believed that "the white Southerner has failed to realize the moral wrongness of segregation." The SNCC designed these actions, not as protests, but to inspire the feeling "that only when all are united under God can there be true brotherhood." According to *The New York Times*, there had been at least 200 kneel-ins across the South and in a few Northern cities. Still, the strategy had not been put to a sustained test.[770]

"Christian Principles" Were Activists' "Logical Starting Point" for Racial Change

The Mississippi church visitors began their work with a hopeful, optimistic spirit. As Carter Dalton Lyon has written, "For the activists and out-of-state ministers who sometimes accompanied them, Christian principles of love for one's neighbor, brotherhood, and equality were at the forefront of their thinking. They felt that if change was going to come, breaking down the barriers of segregation in the Christian church would be a logical beginning point." The activists hoped to reach the hearts of white pastors. They recognized that clergy held a unique position of moral authority in their communities. They hoped the ministers might act as mediators in the racial issues that were boiling to the surface in Mississippi. Many supporters of the civil rights movement who came to Mississippi were motivated by a religious impulse, believing that segregation was not only unconstitutional, but also a sin. They believed that "if positive and non-violent change would ever occur in Mississippi, it would happen because white Christians saw their effort as a moral one."[771]

Though segregationists and white supremacists also put forth religious arguments—principally defensive in tone—they therefore understood the moral challenge the church visits posed. The civil rights movement in Mississippi was framed from its outset as a religious conflict. Thus, when ushers at white-controlled churches blocked integrated groups from worshiping, "they knew they could not concede the moral grounds for integration if they wanted their side to prevail."[772]

Segregationists realized that churches were one of the last social spaces they controlled. The church visits

[769] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 174-75.

[770] Clayborne Carson, ed. *The Student Voice, 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (Westport, Conn.: Meckler, 1990): 7; *New York Times* (January 9, 1961): 28.

[771] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 1, 10. The motivation of religious persons to travel to the American South in this era could derive from principles held by the earlier Puritan tradition, where individuals and congregations felt responsible for the moral and spiritual well-being of the wider community. Historian of the religious aspects of the Hattiesburg civil rights campaign, Robert Patrick Rayner, observed that "when Northern churches approved their ministers joining the ranks of protestors, picketers, and demonstrators, they declared that civil rights protest fell within the responsibilities of their ministry and the ministry of the Presbyterian Church." see Robert Patrick Rayner, "On Theological Grounds: Hattiesburg Presbyterians and the Civil Rights Movement" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 2009): 40-41.

[772] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 10-11.

came at a time when segregationists were losing their grip on schools, hotels, restaurants, and places of business. The Civil Rights Act was before Congress, and though city officials had quashed civil rights demonstrations in the business district in late May and early June 1963, the mayor was beginning to make concessions that gradually accommodated demands of the civil rights leaders. It was clearly time to move forward. It was believed to be a critical moment for involving the churches in the movement for peaceful change. But with Jackson's public schools set to integrate in the fall of 1964, Citizens' Council leaders, as well as the State Sovereignty Commission, the two segregationist-controlled daily newspapers, the police, and segregationist pastors and church boards, closed ranks to prevent further integration, drawing a line at the doorway of religious congregations as a defense of last resort. As Lyon noted, "Segregationists, like the Tougaloo activists, understood that the keys to unlocking Jackson's 'closed society' were found on the city's church doors."[773]

The activities of the Jackson church visitors garnered national attention. In the early summer of 1963, several white Baptist pastors in Jackson had received mimeographed letters from an unknown source, warning them that the NAACP would soon attempt to desegregate the city's churches. Several of the city's Baptist churches enacted closed-door policies. Early in the week of May 28, Jackson police had reported rumors to the State Sovereignty Commission that activists would hold sit-ins at white churches.[774]

Racial Change at Universities Preceded Integration in Mississippi's Churches

A great deal of controversy surrounded a decision to allow the basketball team of Mississippi State University to play in a championship tournament against Loyola University of Chicago in East Lansing, Michigan, on March 15, 1963. A story in *The Commercial Appeal* indicated that some members of the state college board not only wanted to keep the team at home, but also to adopt an official policy against any state-supported institution competing in integrated events. Because of a refusal to play teams with African American players, Mississippi State had yielded its right to enter tournament playoffs in 1959, 1961, and 1962.

The University of Mississippi's basketball team had also forfeited its right to enter tournament play for similar reasons. As the 1963 tournaments drew near, opposition crystallized once again. *The Meridian Star* said that "We are fully aware of the loss of certain prestige by not playing integrated teams. However, as dear as the athletic prestige of our schools may be, our southern way of life is infinitely more precious." Governor Barnett also indicated that he was opposed to State's playing in the tourney at East Lansing. A resolution was introduced in the state senate to prevent winning teams from accepting invitations to postseason games involving integrated teams. A complaint was filed in the civil courts to prevent the Mississippi State team from traveling to Michigan, but the Mississippi State coach and athletic director, as well as other top officials, left Starkville before the papers could be served. The team played in the tournament but was defeated 61 to 54. PCUS Belhaven College also maintained a segregated policy for its athletic teams. Official change did come, however. On June 5, 1963, an African American student was admitted to the University of Mississippi Law School. Though some urged that the law school be closed rather than see a Black admitted, Governor Barnett appeared on television in Jackson and announced that, "It would be unwise and futile for the State of Mississippi to enter into physical or shooting combat with the United States Army."[775]

Integrated Church Visits Begin

On June 2, 1963, just days before NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers was murdered, the Rev. Edwin King organized the city's first church visits. Over the next two Sundays, African American and white students in mixed groups were refused admittance at First Baptist, Capitol Street Methodist, Central Presbyterian, and First

[773] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 11.
[774] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 79-80, 98-99.
[775] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 191-201.

Christian, while others were welcomed at St. Peter's Catholic and St. Andrew's Episcopal.[776] There was precedent for the church visitors' actions, for they knew that two months earlier on Easter Day, April 14, 1963, in Birmingham, two white churches had admitted African American visitors while three other congregations had turned them away.[777]

On June 7, the General Board of the National Council of Churches declared that a full-scale crisis then existed on the issue of civil rights. The council noted, in particular, the segregation and exclusion of worshipers in some congregations—so that "many churches are closed to Negroes and other ethnic minorities," so that the Church itself was therefore "not free from sin on this serious issue." The board urged its own units as well as its member communions "to examine their structures and practices in order to eliminate discrimination and injustice within the church." It also created a new agency, the Commission on Religion and Race. It instructed the new agency to encourage direct action, such as demonstrations and sit-ins, to lobby on behalf of new civil rights legislation. It called for development of integrated congregations that could serve as models for others.[778]

Jackson civil rights leaders became increasingly interested in visiting white churches, as the Rev. Ed King wrote, "to bring the segregation issue to the conscience of White Christians." One furtive attempt had been made to visit a Baptist Church two months earlier; now a more concerted effort was now envisioned. Plans were made to visit Jackson's historic First Baptist Church—the state's largest white religious congregation—an act bound to have further significance, as its morning service was televised statewide.[779] The attempted visit, along with attempts at several other churches, took place on Sunday, June 9. Integrated groups were turned away from First Baptist, Broadmoor Baptist, Calvary Baptist, Woodland Hills Baptist, Capitol Street Methodist, and Galloway Methodist. Only at St. Peter's Catholic Cathedral was a racially mixed party of visitors admitted, as they would be on many subsequent occasions. As early as 1951, Bishop Gerow had urged priests to "remember that the parish is a general church and may be attended by anyone no matter what his race." He urged his clergy to work to eliminate segregated seating, "and to make our people realize that there is only one race recognized by Almighty God, and that is the human race."[780]

That morning, Dr. Selah of Galloway Methodist learned just before the morning service that ushers had turned five African Americans away. After preaching the sermon, he declared that he could not serve a church where worshipers were turned away and announced that he would ask the bishop to appoint him to another church. He said that he "could not judge the motives of people who come to worship in this church. Only God can do that." Associate pastor Jerry Furr, also resigned. Later in the summer, on a Sunday when Bishop Franklin preached at Galloway, African American worshipers were again turned away with no objections raised from the pulpit.[781]

Medgar Evers Took Part in Planning of June 9 Church Visits

Medgar Evers took part in the planning of the June 9 church visits. Three days later, he was assassinated in his driveway by a sniper's bullet.[782] As Lyon noted, "Medgar Evers' planning and participation in [the June 9] church visits were his last acts of protest against racial injustice. . . . The visits sparked conversations and debates within churches, forcing members to confront segregation within their sanctuaries. . . . Even though they attended churches that had been historically all-white, the visibility of this segregation was not evident until

[776] See Michael V. Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1911–1984: A History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Publishing, 1998).

[777] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 174-75.

[778] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 103; "The Prophet and the Preacher," unpublished manuscript, 161. Ed King papers.

[779] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 104-05.

[780] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 84, 105,107, 147, 150.

[781] Cunningham, *Agony at* Galloway, 7; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 136-41, 15-53; Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 15.

[782] Myrlie Evers-Williams and Manning Marable, *The Autobiography of Medgar Evers: A Hero's Life and Legacy Revealed Through his Writings, Letters, and Speeches* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

African Americans tried to attend. The church visits made segregation visible in the Christian Church." By contrast, historically African American congregations in Jackson cordially welcomed white visitors throughout this period.[783]

The Evers slaying evoked civil rights interest in Jackson. Many who had reservations about the wisdom of direct activism now agreed that demonstrations should begin. The National Council of Churches sent a delegation to Evers' funeral. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. also attended. Soon after, several hundred leading ministers from around the country were invited to the White House where President Kennedy delivered a speech declaring that the race question was primarily a moral one, and that it was the duty of religious leaders, "to bring this moral aspect of the question to the people." After the speech, the president phoned Mayor Thompson, to discuss the situation in Jackson.

The Rev. J. P. F. Stevenson Dismissed as Clarksdale City Chaplain

Jackson was not the only Mississippi city to be affected by segregationist violence. In Clarksdale, as tensions rose over a federal lawsuit to desegregate Clarksdale's city hall, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools county courthouse, public library, and hospital, local civil rights activist Aaron Henry's drugstore was firebombed, and a few weeks later, shots were fired into his home. Six days after the shots were fired into Henry's home, on June 12, the city's mayor and board of aldermen rejected a request calling for a biracial committee to consider complaints of desegregation. The Rev. J. P. F. Stevenson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, supported the proposal, angering segregationist leaders. That night, he was summarily dismissed from his volunteer position as city hall chaplain. Later that night, Jackson civil rights activist Medgar Evers was murdered in Jackson.[784]

Stevenson, however, continued to press for a biracial council in Clarksdale. When he suggested that the local ministerial association invite three or four African American pastors to join the group, his motion was tabled before a vote could be called. He served the First Church of Clarksdale until the federal courts ordered the full desegregation of local public schools. When the session offered to make the church annex available to a group planning to establish a private school for white children, Stevenson became more vocal. He warned that by sacrificing its commitment to public schools for all, the city was setting itself on a path to disaster. Although a native of Alabama, he was viewed by many in Clarksdale as an outsider, and in 1968, he left Clarksdale to become pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church in Bristol, Virginia. In 1970, the Clarksdale Church called the Rev. Norman E. Harper from Belhaven College to serve as its pastor and to assist in the organization of a Presbyterian Day School. Thereafter, the ministers of the Clarksdale Church served in the dual capacities of pastor of the church and headmaster of the school.[785]

Visitors Admitted at Temple Beth Israel

Undeterred by Evers' assassination, on June 16, groups of African American and white students again sought to visit several white Jackson churches. All the churches that had turned Black visitors away previously did so again. The visitors were admitted at Temple Beth Israel. Rabbi Perry Nussbaum, a liberal on racial issues by prevailing Mississippi standards, had ministered to Freedom Riders at Parchman in 1961 and had criticized his B'nai B'rith lodge when he learned that a Citizens' Council speaker had been invited to address the group.[786]

[783] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 107-08, 111-12.

[784] "Mississippi Pastor No Longer Chaplain," *Presbyterian Outlook* 145 (July 8, 1963): 12; Curtis Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey Through Events that Shaped the Modern South* (New York: Scribner's, 2001), 121.

[785] Wilkie, *Dixie*, 156-57.

[786] "Eighteen Negroes Try More Churches," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (June 17, 1963); Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 124-26, 128.

Mixed Group Turned Away at Central Presbyterian

On June 16, integrated student groups were turned away from two other churches, First Christian and Central Presbyterian. According to a news article, "The two men walked up the steps [at Central Presbyterian] to a group of ushers and shook their hands, asking if they could attend the worship service. The young men insisted that they were not there to cause trouble. One of the ushers responded that the church leaders did not think it would be best to admit them and offered to transport them to an African American church. Recognizing the resolve of the greeters, the two men explained that they did not want any trouble and then shook the ushers' hands and climbed into a nearby taxi. Yet the church visit was not without incident, as one of the ushers hurried down the steps to shove a television cameraman before the other ushers intervened to restrain him. A larger group of African American visitors returned that night, but the ushers turned them away again."[787]

Localism Prevailed Against Denominational Desegregation Positions

While the PCUS and Presbyterian U.S.A. General Assemblies had endorsed the *Brown* decision soon after it was issued, a decades-long backlash developed, as regional governing bodies and particular congregations rejected the determinations reached by the wider church. Jackson proved to be one of the storm centers for this disjunction between local churches and the higher governing bodies of the major denominations, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. A kind of localism prevailed in the Jackson churches, not only among Southern Baptists whose annual convention decisions were only advisory in nature, but also in connectional or hierarchical communions such as the Roman Catholic, Episcopal Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian, all of which had power to regulate the conduct of ministers and congregations under their jurisdiction. As Dalton Lyon observed, "Many white churches in Jackson saw themselves as private houses of worship subject to their own racial policies, regardless of whether or not the congregation was a connectional body affiliated with a . . . larger denomination." The confrontations revealed a basic theological issue. He remarked that, "At the basic level, the fight . . . was really a fight over the meaning of 'church' itself." In some cases, progressive Methodist and Lutheran pastors in Jackson did not receive support from their ecclesiastical superiors. The PCUS, with its conciliar form of government, was paralyzed. Some ministers departed the state, while others sought to work within the segregationist environment, laboring as shepherds to lead an errant flock. Scholars such as David Chappell, however, have argued that white supremacists ultimately failed to keep church doors closed to African Americans, in part because they did not have strong backing from leaders in many of the white congregations.[788]

The admission of African American worshipers to St. Andrew's on June 16, 1963, received national publicity. A *Clarion-Ledger* article commented that, "Reverend Christoph Keller at St. Andrew's in his message of the morning mentioned achievements in space as contrasted to the lack of attainments made in human relations." Four African American women did attend St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on June 16. St. Andrew's was the first white Protestant congregation in Jackson to open its doors to African American worshipers—an event that resulted in front-page articles and photographs in *The Los Angeles Times* as well as *The New York Times*. The church's rector, the Rev. Christoph Keller Jr., became a voice for racial reconciliation. He had come to the church in October 1962, just a few weeks after the riots at Ole Miss.[789]

City authorities were apparently aware that the visitors would attempt to visit St. Andrew's Church, and though church officials had not requested any police presence, officers gathered outside the church, and an armored anti-riot vehicle was positioned outside the church in front of the Governor's Mansion. On other occasions when mixed groups approached the church, police recorded the license plate numbers on the visitors' cars.[790]

[787] *Los Angeles Times* (June 17, 1963): 16.
[788] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 8.
[789] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 128-30.
[790] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 133-35, 142.

Mississippi's largest Episcopal congregation (similar in size and prominence to Jackson's First Presbyterian Church), after initial resistance, gathered many of the city's moderate leaders. The diocese moved forward under the careful but progressive leadership of their bishop, the Rt. Rev. John M. Allin. In 1974, Allin's forward look and work for racial reconciliation were recognized in his election as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. His successor as bishop of Mississippi was the Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray Jr., rector at St. Peter's Church, Oxford, during the Ole Miss upheavals. Gray became a spokesman for civil rights.[791]

Churches Rushed to Create Segregation Policies

As the Jackson church visits got under way, white congregations around the state that had not passed earlier resolutions excluding African American worshipers now rushed to formulate policies forbidding their admission. Presbyterian churches at Canton, Hattiesburg, Hazlehurst, Holly Springs, Meridian, and Starkville, all adopted white-only worship policies. The Hazlehurst resolution "agreed to deny admission to Negroes," and further provided that "Should any such visitors actually enter the church during a service, the pastor is to bring the service to an immediate conclusion." Dupont stated that the records of every Mississippi Presbyterian congregation she was able to examine indicated that a resolution excluding African Americans was enacted during this period. At some churches, ushers acted without written policies, but after the first visits occurred, Jackson's Capitol Street Methodist and First Baptist Churches followed the 1954 example of the city's First Presbyterian Church, adopting formal resolutions to exclude African American worshipers and those who came with them. The city's Alta Woods, Central, and North Park Presbyterian Churches all adopted such resolutions.[792]

The two Jackson newspapers, *The Clarion-Ledger* and *Jackson Daily News*, exercised immense influence during this period. Both papers were strong voices for the Citizens' Council and segregation. Expression of such opinion was not confined to the editorial page. During the 1960s, a columnist in *The Jackson Daily News* published a coarse joke that implied that just as an African American man would likely be lynched for dancing in public with a white woman, so also, he could meet the same fate for attending a white church. Besides the obvious rebuke to interracial association, the joke equated participation in worship with dancing, an activity many conservatives considered to be sinful. Mississippi Christians, as civil rights historian Charles Marsh observed, "A formidable number of the nearly 5,000 Blacks lynched in the South since the Civil War were accused of some kind of sexual impropriety. But coupling of sexual prohibition with the integration of the church—the insinuation that worshiping in a white congregation was no less a violation of racial doctrine than slow dancing with 'the swellest blonde' [as described in the joke]—attests to a dimension of white anxiety that easily evades theological analysis." Nonetheless, Marsh ventured that *The Jackson Daily News* columnist believed that "The purity of the white church must be guarded with the same vigilance given the protection of white feminine virtue."[793]

Visitors Barred at Jackson's First Presbyterian Church

On July 21, mixed groups of students were turned away from West Capitol Street Church of Christ and the First Presbyterian Church. This was the only attempt to visit First Presbyterian. Though the congregation annually contributed tens of thousands of dollars to African missions (the church was one of the largest contributors to foreign missions in the entire PCUS), the session's longstanding local closed-door policy stated that "segregation of the races is

[791] *The Episcopal Church in Mississippi, 1763-1992* (Jackson: Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, 1992): 118-19; Sherwood Willing Wise, *The Cathedral Church of St. Andrew: A Sesquicentennial History, 1839-1989* (Jackson: The Cathedral Church of St. Andrew, 1989): 157-72; Gardiner H. Shattuck Jr., *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000): 120-21; Will D. Campbell, *"And Also With You:" Duncan Gray and the American Dilemma* (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House, 1997).

[792] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 15-61, 270.

[793] Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 82-83.

not discrimination," and that the church intended to "maintain its traditional policy of distinct separation of the races." First Presbyterian Church was a bastion against change. The Rev. John Reed Miller, the congregation's articulate and doctrinally conservative minister, led conservatives in the PCUS and the "continuing church" movement.

Miller was also associated with segregationist and conservative causes in the city of Jackson. He developed a close friendship with W. J. Simmons, the head of the White Citizens' Council. (Simmons later moved his membership from First Baptist to the First Presbyterian Church.) In June 1963, Miller gave the invocation at a dinner entertaining Southern Un-pledged Presidential Electors where Alabama Governor George Wallace was the featured speaker. (This was in an era in which it would have been highly unusual for a Presbyterian minister to appear at a political occasion.)

The event took place just a week after Wallace had reluctantly submitted to federal authorities enforcing a court order that integrated the University of Alabama. At the dinner, Wallace urged attendees to defeat President Kennedy in the upcoming election on the ground that Kennedy was setting up "a military dictatorship for the protection of Negro Rights." The Rev. Ed King later termed John Reed Miller, "a sort of chaplain of the White Citizens' Council."[794]

Citizens' Council Members Held Prominent Positions in Jackson Churches

Citizens' Council members filled high offices in such congregations as First Baptist, Galloway Methodist, and First Presbyterian. The Rev. W. J. Cunningham, who succeeded W. B. Selah at Galloway Methodist, later wrote that, "No major decisions were made in board meetings that did not square with the Citizens' Council," adding that, "Without a doubt a prime factor in creating the closed-door policy at Galloway was the powerful Citizens' Council backed by the awesome might of the State Sovereignty Commission." Business leaders led by William H. Mounger had called for an end to segregationist resistance in the autumn of 1962 when the University of Mississippi was desegregated. (Mounger had later suffered retaliation in the business community.) But as demonstrations and boycotts disrupted commerce in Jackson, business leaders aligned with the White Citizens' Council counseled resistance to civil rights demands. Jackson's mayor Allen Thompson also aligned his actions with council positions.

These initial visits settled into a protracted effort. Jackson became the only city where mixed-race groups mounted a protracted campaign to visit white-controlled churches with segregation policies. Dalton Lyon wrote that, "In 1963 and 1964, the steps of churches in Jackson, Mississippi became one of the key front lines in the national struggle over civil rights. For ten months, integrated groups attempted to attend Sunday worship at 22 all-white Protestant and Catholic churches."[795]

During this period, mixed groups also attempted to worship at the city's downtown Trinity Lutheran Church where, on various occasions, worshipers were admitted or denied as officials vacillated over what to do. But until this point, except for occasional acts of harassment such as taking down license plate numbers, the matter of admitting or rebuffing the mixed groups of church visitors had been left to the discretion of church leaders.

The visits occasioned intense controversy in congregations, eventually resulting in the resignation of Jackson Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Wade Harold Koons, who had served as his congregation's pastor since 1953. The situation even drew a letter on City of Jackson stationery from a church member who was also a city commissioner, urging fellow Lutheran church members to vote against race "mixing." According to the city commissioner, attempts by integrated groups coming to the church constituted a breach of the peace. He stated that such persons, if they persisted, would be arrested. The city commissioner wrote, expressly threatening his pastor that, "anyone, regardless of their official capacity, interfering with any officer of the law will also be handled according to law."[796]

[794] "Mississippi Lambasted by Tougaloo Chaplain," *Jackson Daily News* (May 2, 1964): 1; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 153-54.

[795] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," vii, 1, 215.

[796] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 323-26, 357-58.

Soon, other government agencies asserted themselves. The State Sovereignty Commission also became involved in Trinity Lutheran's deliberation of the matter. A memo written by director Erle Johnston stated that the commission "worked with a group opposing the integration and the Director [Johnston] wrote a letter outlining reasons for retaining segregation and gave it to the committee to be used as the committee wished."

Dalton Lyon observed that because several Jackson ministers, to varying degrees, were failing to support efforts to maintain segregation, with a few even opposing such efforts, city and state officials, as well as the Citizens' Council, stepped into the breach. He wrote that, "In the absence of ecclesiastical support, backers of a closed-door policy turned to the enforcers of Mississippi's closed society, the state government. [Erle] Johnston willingly intervened because he recognized that the church visits [had] succeeded in integrating one [Protestant] church and were on the verge of succeeding at another. As the director of a state agency responsible for sustaining segregation, he hoped to prevent another victory for the racial agitators."

By late summer, students had also visited and been admitted to the city's First Unitarian Church, which had begun the first integrated Head Start program in the state. The residence of its minister, the Rev. Donald A. Thompson, was later firebombed by white supremacists. (Thompson was also shot in the back and critically wounded by Klansmen in August 1965.) During this period, attempts were also made to visit one of the city's Presbyterian churches, though the record is not clear as to which one.[797]

Several Jackson ministers, among them the Revs. Robert Lawrence of Covenant Presbyterian, Park H. Moore of Trinity Presbyterian, and G. Roland Sims of Central Presbyterian, personally paid for a full-page ad in *The Sunday Clarion-Ledger*, deploring the nightrider shooting and calling for a full investigation of the Thompson incident. Thompson survived and resolved to remain in Jackson, which he did until death threats began to surface, not against him but against his congregants if he remained. The three ministers, by taking a public stand, thereby made themselves targets.[798]

New Minister Appointed for Galloway Methodist

The Rev. Roland Sims was pastor of Jackson's Central Presbyterian Church from 1956 to 1971. He and several other Jackson ministers personally paid for a full-page ad in the Sunday Clarion-Ledger deploring Ku Klux Klan activities and calling for a full investigation of night-rider terrorist violence.

[797] Gordon D. Gibson, *Unitarians and Universalists in the Civil Rights Era* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2015).

[798] "Jackson Ministers Ask Probe of Shooting," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (September 13, 1965): 3.

In September 1963, the Rev. W. J. Cunningham, pastor of St. John's Methodist Church in Memphis, was appointed to Galloway Methodist. While making clear that he disapproved of enforced segregation, Cunningham accepted the appointment with a view toward reconciling disputing parties and emphasizing ministries that all agreed upon. But soon after his arrival, the Rev. Ed King and an African American student were arrested by police as they tried to enter the church to attend Sunday school. As soon as the church service was completed, Cunningham went to the jail to secure their release.

On September 15, 1963, a dynamite explosion had killed four young African American girls and injured 23 others at Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Some Mississippi religious entities began to speak out. The editors of *The Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, that denomination's official newspaper, hoped that "Perhaps the death of four little girls will awaken the nation to the folly of racial injustice."[799]

Opposition to the church visits in Jackson continued. By this time, integrated groups had sought entrance to 13 different white congregations in Jackson and been admitted to four. This prompted a well-publicized campaign by the State Sovereignty Commission, "to save the Jackson churches from race mixing," with the Citizens' Council involved. *The Clarion-Ledger* announced the plan on September 22, with a headline that proclaimed: "Council Plans Fight Against Church Mixing."[800]

Dalton Lyon remarked, that "Significantly, in the year since losing the fight over James Meredith's admission into the University of Mississippi, the Citizens' Council had seen its grasp on Jackson slip. While enjoying influence in all branches of state and local government, the Jackson Citizens' Council leaders were dismayed about recent concessions made by Mayor Thompson." In an August newsletter, the council expressed gratitude that only a few churches "admitted negro demonstrators to worship services," noting that, 'In view of the numerous assaults upon our Churches each Sunday this is an excellent record." Yet, pointing to "a 'secret group' within one of the churches" that "welcomed the negro [*sic*] demonstrators without prior church approval," they warned council members that "integration doesn't just happen—in every case it is an 'inside job.'"

The council announced a series of meetings to be held by lay leaders of the various denominations, which would produce a plan "to eliminate church integration entirely." The newsletter also warned of candidates for the legislature who had the backing of such secret groups "dedicated to church and school integration," and urged council members to "be sure these would-be integrationists are defeated." On September 23, *The Clarion-Ledger* published a lengthy front page article entitled, "The Role of the Lord's People: Evangelization, Not Equalization, Said to Be Task of the Church."[801]

The White Citizens' Councils answered the threat of mixed-race worship by offering meetings for laypersons who wanted to keep their churches segregated. In October, just after the Jackson Citizens' Council announced its campaign to "save these churches from integration," police began arresting visitors who were denied entrance. In some cases, these arrests were not initiated by complaint from the congregations involved. On a Sunday in 1964, a member of Galloway Methodist brought an African American student to Sunday school. The two made it past the police, who followed them into the class and interrupted the lesson to arrest them.[802]

The Methodist Advocate reported that the early arrests occurred without consultation of church officials. Police compelled African American trusties from the city jail to escort activists to the paddy wagons. As Lyon noted, the leaders of the segregationist power structure, the State Sovereignty Commission, Citizens' Council, as well as the Jackson police, "understood that they were in danger of losing their churches to integration." Lyon wrote that, "While the specific issue of segregation in Jackson churches may not have been strategically important considering the other issues on the table, particularly the [pending] Civil Rights Act and the status of desegregation in public schools. . . . the overarching issue of the use of Christianity in defending segregation was certainly crucial in buttressing the Council's pro-segregation argument."[803]

[799] *Mississippi Methodist Advocate* (September 25, 1963); Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 175-77.

[800] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 156-67, 168.

[801] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 184, 189.

[802] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 162, 164.

[803] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 2, 4, 167, 186.

Tougaloo students compiled a summary of the church visit campaign a few months after it concluded. They described the role of the Citizens' Council in maintaining segregation policies in the Jackson churches: "Leading laymen, who are also Jackson businessmen, were informed by the banks (a member of the board of each Jackson bank is on the board of the Citizens' Council) that if their churches did not adopt a closed-door policy their business would receive no more loans. During the summer, Council members had been transferring their membership from one church to another to gain control of all the leading churches."[804]

World Council of Churches Calls for Removal of Racial Barriers in Congregations

At their annual meeting in New York City in October 1963, the World Council of Churches issued a statement that, "Only by removal of racial barriers can churches themselves faithfully preach the Gospel." The statement was issued concurrent with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington, to that date the largest civil rights demonstration in America. But as W. J. Simmons later observed, the Citizens' Council believed that the matter of segregation was "sociological, not theological."

Many conservatives within the churches did see a theological question. Northern ministers in hierarchical connectional churches, such as the Methodist or Presbyterian, asserted that Jackson churches must integrate because of directives enacted by the national governing bodies of their ecclesiastical communions. But most theological conservatives as well as segregationists claimed that true power resided on the local level as voted by the majority of congregational members. (By contrast, conservatives called the national governing bodies to exercise their full judicial authority when they believed professors in or graduates from certain educational institutions were "weak" on other theological issues, such as adherence to traditional understandings of the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection of Christ.)[805]

Fondren Leaders Challenged by Mixed-Group Leaders

On Sunday, October 6, observed in many churches as World Communion Sunday, integrated groups sought to visit seven Jackson churches, including Fondren Presbyterian. The Rev. J. Moody McDill, Fondren's pastor, had welcomed the Rev. William Hutchinson, a white Tougaloo professor, who had been ordained in the UPUSA that summer. Hutchinson had accompanied African American worshipers who attempted to visit segregationist-controlled churches.

The session at Fondren initially temporized when asked to vote on an open-door policy, and as in several Presbyterian congregations, a difference of opinion arose between the session and the deacons, with the deacons taking a more conservative view. Amid the irony that the original deacons, as portrayed in Acts 7, were appointed to mediate between the needs of Jewish and Gentile Christians, on October 6, the Fondren deacons, acting against a policy adopted by the session, refused to allow Hutchinson, who had become a regular part of the church's Sunday congregation, to enter with several African American students who had accompanied him that day. This prompted McDill to announce during services the following week that he would resign if ushers continued to bar African Americans from entering the church. His sermon addressed the race issue—one of the few preached in Jackson during that era that spoke to the matter in an inclusive way. The next Sunday, Hutchinson, along with an African American and white student who accompanied him, was allowed to attend the morning service. McDill told activists in the autumn of 1963 of pressures brought to bear on some of his church's members, that their employers had told them, "that they would lose their jobs if the church remained open" to African American visitors.

[804] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 7-16; "'On Our Knees:' The Story of the Jackson Church Visits" (November 18, 1963), Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[805] *Ecumenical Review* 16 (October 1963): 100-103.

The Rev. Spencer C. Murray, a Starkville native, left North Park Presbyterian Church in the Jackson suburbs over the issue in September.[806]

Controversy Surrounded Use of NCC Funds for Bail of Arrested Jackson Church Visitors

Dupont wrote that on World Communion Sunday, "the police presence expanded, [so that] white families on the way to church passed by officers with a full complement of billy clubs, wagons, barking dogs, and noisy walkie-talkies." Several African Americans were arrested for violating a statute against "interfering with divine worship." Three young women were sentenced to six months in jail and fines of $1,000 each. Their visits were covered by Northern papers such as *The Chicago Daily News*. Controversy ensued as denominational officials and representatives of the National Council of Churches based outside the state used church funds to provide bail for church visitors arrested in Jackson. The NCC sought a federal court injunction against future arrests and prosecutions of church visitors on the ground that the Jackson police action denied the visitors the right to the free exercise of religion guaranteed by the First Amendment.[807]

Mississippi Presbyterian Reactions to President Kennedy's Assassination

Mississippians of all political affiliations were shocked when they heard that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated, November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas.[808] The Rev. William G. McAtee of Amory was to have attended a statewide Westminster Fellowship retreat at Tougaloo College. The retreat was canceled and McAtee preached in his church at Amory on November 24, which was the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day. Taking his text from Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord," McAtee said that in that brief line one could see the hand of God moving in history. He wondered how God was working in the death of the President. He also noted that it was a sad day "when even a few school children cheered at hearing the news from Dallas. It was unforgivable to hear grown men say, 'I hope he dies,' even as the chief executive's life blood ebbed out, staining the clothes of a devoted wife." It was a sad day, McAtee remembered, but what could you expect? Kennedy had commonly been vilified among white Mississippians.

Methodist Bishops Condemn Church Segregation

African American and white visitors continued their attempts to worship at Galloway and Capitol Street Methodist Churches, as well as other Jackson Methodist congregations, during the autumn and winter of 1963. Integrated groups from cities as distant as Chicago and New York came to Jackson for this purpose and were arrested and jailed. Unlike other ministers in Jackson, the Rev. W. J. Cunningham invited the protesters into his study. He wrote later that, "The burden of their remarks was always the same: they had not come to tell us what to do; they had evils in their own congregations back home. But our closed-door policy had created a diseased spot on the Body of Christ. It had weakened the influence of their own churches, and I as pastor must open the doors to all."[809]

The ongoing visits and arrests received national publicity, as well as official notice of the higher councils of the Methodist Church. Indeed, the high councils of the nation's religious denominations took notice of events in Mississippi and elsewhere. In November 1963, as the PCUS debated proposals to amend *The Book of Church Order*

[806] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 195-98, 235, 241-42, 263-65, 364-65; Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 121, 164. See Bill Hutchinson, "Memorial Day Memories of Mississippi," *Your Smithfield Magazine* (May 2008): 13, 77.

[807] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 161; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 207-08.

[808] This author remembers how some of the children cheered when the teacher told our 5th grade class that the President had been assassinated.

[809] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 9-12.

to forbid discrimination on the basis of race in the admission of worshipers or candidates for membership, bishops of the Methodist Church declared that, "We urge our pastors upon whom rests the responsibility of receiving persons into the church, to receive all who are qualified and who desire to be received without regard to race, color, or national origin, and we individually and collectively pledge our support as they do so. The Methodist Church is an inclusive church."

The bishops declared further that, "We decry, on legal as well as Christian grounds, the denial to any person of any color or race the right of membership or the right to worship in any Methodist Church. Further, to move to arrest any persons attempting to worship is to us an outrage." The resolution concluded, saying, "We call upon all Methodist institutions where such has not been done, to bring their racial policies and practices in line with the Christian principle of racial inclusiveness to which we are committed." The bishops affirmed the right of oppressed minorities to protest and assemble in public, as long as demonstrations were orderly. The declaration was clearly directed at Galloway Church. Increasing unrest and division of opinion appeared in the congregation. Some urged cooperation; others sought to eliminate contributions to causes of the wider Church that were identified as unfriendly to racial segregation.[810]

On January 12, 1964, a mixed group attempting to worship at Central Presbyterian was stopped by police just as a female student had her hand on the church's doorknob. They left the premises peacefully. Others were turned away from First Christian, but were seated at St. Andrew's Episcopal, where one of the activists was invited to meet that evening with the congregation's high school and college groups.[811]

Paul B. Johnson Succeeds Ross Barnett as Governor

Paul B. Johnson Jr., Mississippi's lieutenant governor under Ross Barnett, was elected governor in 1963 on a segregationist platform. Bumper stickers recalling his confrontation with the federal marshals in Oxford during the Meredith crisis, urged voters to "Stand Tall with Paul." Still, Johnson realized that a hardline position on segregation could not be sustained. In his inaugural address on January 22, 1964, Johnson pledged "to strengthen Mississippi's ties with the rest of the nation and to shun ignorance, prejudice, and hate." He declared he would not fight "a rearguard defense for yesterday." Instead, he would work "for our share of tomorrow!" Johnson justified this stance by reminding his audience, "that the Mississippi economy is not divisible by political party or faction, or even by race, color, or creed." Economics, not the influence of religion, would be the motivating factor. "We are Americans as well as Mississippians," the new governor declared. "Hate or prejudice or ignorance will not lead Mississippi while I sit in the governor's chair."

Students Barred from Fondren on Race Relations Sunday

The Fondren Presbyterian session equivocated on revising its open-door policy, deciding that African Americans "insisting" upon visiting the church were to be seated in a balcony. Activists visited the church on February 9—Race Relations Sunday in the PCUS. Despite the official policy granting this qualified admission to African American worshipers, deacons on duty at the church door barred the students. One of the visitors later remembered that a few church men, "took it upon themselves to turn people away." Ushers at St. Luke's Methodist, across the street from Fondren, also refused seating to a group of student visitors. The Fondren ushers again refused entry to an integrated group the following Sunday. McDill apologized to a white member of the visiting group. "This marked the second Sunday in a row that [lay] church officials barred integrated groups from Fondren, despite the recent move by the session to affirm the quasi-open-door policy in which ushers would try to convince the activists

[810] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 24-27, 30-35; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 292.

[811] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 292, 338-39.

to go elsewhere but would ultimately seat them if the visitors persisted." The incidents revealed a controversy among the majority of the session, its moderator, Dr. McDill, and certain deacons and ushers.[812]

On February 17, Bishop Gerow gathered an interracial group of ministers—the first such meeting since the previous spring. Dr. McDill was one of those attending, along with the Rev. Robert Lawrence of Covenant Presbyterian. The meeting did not result in formal resolutions, but the group noted that two policemen, as well as a WLBT television truck were parked across the street to observe the ministers going in and out of the chancery office.[813]

The Rev. Bernard Law, editor of the *Mississippi Register*, the state's Roman Catholic paper, who would, as Cardinal Law of Boston, be disgraced in the sex abuse scandals uncovered in a later era, editorialized in Jackson about his concern over "police power" that was "overstepping its bounds to an alarming degree." Law cited a letter from a Jackson official to his local church in which the man suggested that even if the church opened its doors to African Americans, that the police would still intervene to enforce the segregation laws then in force. In hearings before Federal Judge Harold Cox, Jackson's Mayor Thompson responded to a question asking whether he had intended "to use whatever means you had officially at your disposal" to "perpetuate or adhere to that policy" of racial segregation within a church. He responded, "That's right." He indicated that he had 500 policemen, if necessary, to assist churches wanting to remain segregated. A city lawyer stated in the same hearing that, "The [Methodist] Discipline and the teachings of the Methodist Church does [*sic*] not matter. So long as we know one person doesn't want a Negro in his church the police will feel free to intervene."[814]

On March 30, nine church visitors appeared before Jackson Municipal Court Judge James L. Spencer. Although they had simply sought to walk up the steps and enter a white-controlled church, they were convicted of disturbing divine worship, sentenced each to six months in jail, and fined $500. Spencer affirmed that the disturbance of worship was constituted "simply by their presence" as African Americans. "The race of the individuals, not their action or their words, constituted the disturbance."[815]

Station WLBT Embroiled in Racial Controversy

In April 1964, Dr. Everett C. Parker, director of communications for the United Church of Christ, petitioned the Federal Communications Commission to deny license renewals for the owners of both Jackson television stations. The litigation was to last 16 years. Provocative incidents included the refusal of station WLBT to carry an interview with then-civil rights lawyer Thurgood Marshall on NBC's *Today* program, broadcasting instead a notice to viewers that indicated cable trouble. Aaron Henry, a Clarksdale civil rights leader, joined the petition, accusing WLBT of blacking out news of the civil rights movement. In the meantime, a biracial group was given control of the station, and in time, both Jackson stations were Black-owned. Services from Jackson's First Presbyterian Church were broadcast over station WLBT, making its strongly segregationist pastor, the Rev. John Reed Miller, the best-known Presbyterian voice in Mississippi.[816]

Visiting Minister Threatened While Attempting to Visit Fondren Church

The Rev. William Hutchinson recalled two incidents in mid-1964 in which his car was followed from the Tougaloo campus as he traveled to and from Fondren Church. Angry white supremacists, having learned of his efforts to bring groups of African American and white students from the college to visit the church, attempted to

[812] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 365, 369-70.

[813] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 371-72.

[814] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 250, 255-56.

[815] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 408-409. See Church Mixers Convicted, Plan to Appeal," *Jackson Daily News* (March 31, 1964): 15; "Judge Chides Nine in Church Mix Try," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (March 31, 1964): 4.

[816] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 387-94.

run him off the road. He narrowly escaped harm. On the first occasion, after being turned away by the ushers at Fondren, the three cars in which Hutchinson and the students were traveling were nearing the Tougaloo campus, when a pickup truck tried to force one car off the road and then followed another one. The frightened students reported that the truck's passengers cursed at them and tried to take pictures of them. Then a Ford passed Hutchinson's car and pulled ahead of him. It stopped suddenly at the turn-off leading to the campus, forcing Hutchinson to apply his brakes. A red Volkswagen simultaneously pulled up behind Hutchinson, pinning his vehicle between the two cars. Hutchinson saw a man jump out of the Volkswagen heading toward him. He quickly maneuvered his car onto the shoulder of the highway with just enough space to make it around the Ford and sped onto the campus.[817]

On the second occasion, February 23, 1964, after setting out for Fondren Church with his wife and baby daughter in the car, as well as an African American Tougaloo student, Hutchinson realized he was being followed by about 20 white men in five cars. The cars surrounded his vehicle, forcing him to stop. One of the men with a stocking over his face brandished a lead pipe and made his way over to the front of Hutchinson's car. Another man with a heavy mallet approached from behind. Just as the first man heaved the pipe against the windshield, hitting the chrome above, Hutchinson pressed the accelerator pedal and threaded his way around the cars and drove on to Fondren. One of the vehicles followed as they entered the church parking lot, but Hutchinson and his passengers were able to get inside the church. They found Dr. McDill and told them what had happened.

After being informed, Dr. A. D. Beittel, president of Tougaloo, phoned the Jackson police to request that they escort the Hutchinsons and the student back to campus, but the request was declined on the ground that police could not cross city lines. Beittel and other faculty members then came to the church to accompany them back to Tougaloo. That afternoon someone phoned the Rev. Ed King on the Tougaloo campus, mistaking him for Hutchinson, threatening to kill him if he brought a baby with him again. Concerned Fondren members contacted city police and the sheriff, but law enforcement officers, while saying they would do anything to prevent lawlessness, gave no assurances of help in this situation. The county officer said that they could not protect the Tougaloo visitors, since the city saw their actions as a violation of the law. Members from Fondren came to the campus to visit the Hutchinsons and express their concern for them. The Hutchinsons then decided to give up trying to bring African American students with them to Fondren.[818]

Intense segregationist pressure was brought to bear on Dr. McDill, so that activists decided to cease their attempts to visit Fondren Church, as he was by then the only sympathetic pastor left in Jackson among those opposed by the Citizens' Council. In addition to the Revs. W. B. Selah and Wade Koons, several other ministers had resigned during this period—in all cases because of their opposition to denial of entrance to mixed-race groups attempting to visit their services. These included the Rev. Roy Hulan, pastor of First Christian Church, and the Rev. Roy Clark at Capitol Street Methodist. McDill remained at Fondren until 1966. Dr. Beittel of Tougaloo was also removed by his institution's board.[819]

The conflict over church integration exposed a growing fault line between the positions held in some local congregations and the official positions of the denominations of which they were members. There was also a noticeable rift between certain clergy and lay leaders. At times, segregationist authorities exploited this to humiliate ministers. In the autumn of 1964, as police arrested activists seeking to enter Galloway Methodist, the ministers asked Chief J. L. Ray how he could arrest the activists when the ministers of the church did not want them arrested. The officer responded, "Do you run your church?" As Lyon observed, "The ministers understood clearly what he was implying, that the lay boards, not the ministers, controlled the churches in Jackson." Activists took some satisfaction in the fact that during the previous June there had been no African Americans attending

[817] Clarice Campbell, *Civil Rights Chronicle* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997): 201; "Danger on the Road," *Voice of the Movement* (February 27, 1964); Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 37-72.

[818] Campbell, *Civil Rights Chronicle*, 204-205; *Your Smithfield*, 79; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 371-74.

[819] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 168-74, 191-92, 358, 376.

white churches in Jackson. "Now, after four months, six of the 22 churches visited had admitted African American visitors, exposing a breach in what once was a bulwark of the city's segregated society."[820]

"Interested White Christians" Invited to Breakaway Anglican Parish

An integrated group was turned away again from Fondren on March 8. Activists concluded that they could count on open doors only at the same places as the previous June, namely, the city's Roman Catholic and Episcopal parishes. Indeed, in early March, the Jackson Citizens' Council announced that laymen in the city's Episcopal churches had recently formed a group to oppose the admittance policies in their churches, inviting a segregationist priest, the Rev. James P. Dees, of Statesville, North Carolina, to speak in Jackson the Wednesday before Easter.

A few months before, Dees had formed and been proclaimed the first bishop of the Anglican Orthodox Church, which had broken away from the Episcopal Church. Though Dees had formed the new church to counter "liberal directions" of the parent body, his views on race were well-known. He called integration an "amalgamation of the races . . . abhorrent to God." Following Dees' visit, an Anglican Orthodox Church was organized in Jackson, which publicly invited, "all interested white Christians" to worship with them. The church soon gathered about 60 communicants drawn from various Jackson churches.[821]

Civil rights issues in Jackson intensified on Easter Day, March 29, 1964, as two Methodist bishops, the Rev. James K. Mathews of Boston and the Rev. Charles F. Golden of Los Angeles, were turned away by Galloway ushers on the ground that Golden was African American. That winter, when Bishop Mathews wrote asking for a copy of Galloway's board resolution barring Negroes, the chairman of the Official Board refused to allow it to be sent to Mathews, as did Mississippi's newly installed Methodist bishop, the Rev. Edward J. Pendergrass.[822]

Events in the Methodist denomination in the spring of 1964 set some Mississippi Methodists on a path toward schism. Following the highly publicized denial of entry to the mixed-race group at Galloway Methodist on Easter Day, the segregationist Mississippi Association of Methodist Ministers and Laymen issued a statement that it would not accept any outcome from the upcoming General Conference of The Methodist Church that would integrate local Methodist churches, claiming support for their position by the fact that no white Methodist church in the state had admitted African Americans during the campaign. The group also asserted that most official boards in local congregations had adopted policies against "mixing."[823]

The Mississippi Association of Methodist Ministers and Laymen circularized delegates to the Methodist General Conference in Pittsburgh, criticizing the methods and underlying purposes of activists who had come to Mississippi and arguing for the right of official boards in individual congregations to set policy concerning whom to admit or exclude from services. The conference took issue with such assertions and added a paragraph to the Methodist Discipline declaring that all—without regard to race, color, national origin, or economic condition—shall be eligible to attend its worship services, to participate in its programs, and be admitted into its membership. . . ." The denomination's judicial council rule, April 28, 1965, that there was no ambiguity in the position of the Church "on the right of all persons to attend its worship services or, after appropriate vows, to be admitted to membership in any local church."[824]

The MAMML called a meeting in Jackson for June 20, 1965, inviting those, "who believe that separations of the races is necessary [*sic*]" as well as those who reject the "social gospel," and who wanted no part of the National Council of Churches. A thousand persons attended the Jackson meeting, voting to dissolve the MAMML

[820] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 226, 333.

[821] "Conservative Anglican Church Formed Here," *Jackson Daily News* (April 28, 1964): 12; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 378, 391, 423.

[822] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 55-56. 98-99.

[823] "Methodist Segregation Group Raps 'Fellowship,'" *Jackson Clarion-Leger* (April 16, 1964): 4.

[824] "Methodists Told to Let Negroes In," *Jackson Daily News* (April 24, 1965): 1; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 430-32, 451, 487.

and reorganize as the Association of Independent Methodists. A large number of leading members from Galloway attended.[825]

Some had cherished a futile hope that the entire Southeastern Jurisdiction might withdraw, or at least the Mississippi and North Mississippi Conferences. However, two Independent Methodist congregations were organized in Jackson, as well as others at other locations around the state. But no large defection from the Methodist denomination occurred in Mississippi. During the year following, about 400 members of Galloway affiliated with a new independent Methodist congregation, which erected a large colonial-style church building on Jackson's Riverside Drive near the campus of Belhaven College.[826] Other independent Methodist congregations were established around the state. During this period, Galloway's membership declined from somewhat over 3,000 to about 2,500. About 100 others left Galloway, some uniting with Jackson's prominent First Baptist and First Presbyterian Churches, which, W. J. Cunningham noted, "were expecting to remain segregated."[827]

Billy Graham Declines to Preach in Jackson Because of Segregated Seating Rules

A further dilemma arose in the spring of 1964 as an invitation was extended to Billy Graham to conduct one of his crusades in the city. A group of Jackson ministers met in the Heidelberg Hotel with Grady Wilson, the evangelist's personal representative. Wilson stated that Graham would not preach to a segregated audience. The majority of the ministers were unwilling to accede to this request, "on the grounds that leading businessmen of the city would not support an integrated meeting." Two Jackson ministers, the Rev. W. J. Cunningham, pastor of Galloway Memorial Methodist Church, and the Rev. David Grant, of the Broadmoor Baptist Church, urged that Graham's conditions be met, as did William E. Barksdale, a lay leader in Galloway Church. Later that summer, the Presbytery of Minneapolis (UPUSA) appealed to Graham to go to Mississippi as an agent of reconciliation. The presbytery believed that no one else had the stature to bring whites and African Americans together under the conditions prevailing in the state.[828]

Graham chose not to come at that time, but Alabama's governor Wallace acceded to a relaxation of segregation in 1965 when Graham preached in Birmingham after the horrific clashes on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. King, of course, challenged Southern white clergy, not for their militant opposition, but for their neutrality. When the axe-handle-wielding Lester Maddox was elected governor of Georgia the following year, it signaled to Southern politicians that despite the dramatic expansion of Black voter registration, any appearance of racial moderation was still ill-advised.[829] When Graham finally returned to Mississippi in May 1975, the effort was supported across racial lines, with both Black and white represented in the planning and oversight of the services, which were held in Jackson's Memorial Stadium—the scene of Governor Barnett's dramatic speech on the evening before the segregationist riots at Ole Miss.[830]

[825] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 67, 132.

[826] The church has since been dissolved; the building now serves as a chapel/performing arts center for Belhaven College.

[827] "Withdrawal Groundwork Mapped Out," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (June 21, 1965): 6; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 489-91; see *The Association of Independent Methodists: The First Twenty-Five Years, 1965-1990* (Jackson, Miss.: Association of Independent Methodists, 1990).

[828] "Minneapolis Presbytery Appeals to Graham," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (August 10, 1964): 3.

[829] Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 143-44; George Lewis, *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Steven P. Miller, "Billy Graham, Civil Rights, and the Changing Postwar South," in Glenn Feldmann, ed., *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005): 157-86.

[830] Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 28-29.

Aftermath of Jackson Church Visits

As the summer of 1964 approached, the seating situation at Jackson's churches had reached an impasse. A few white churches had admitted African American and racially mixed groups, but ominously, the frequent cross burnings in the city and around the state turned into church burnings. African American churches, especially those that had opened their doors to white civil rights workers, were being burned at the rate of one every week. Opinions were divided. Some believed that the segregationist churches had disgraced the gospel before both the nation and the world; others blamed negative publicity on the unwarranted interference of "outside agitators."

In May 1964, activists concluded that the church visits had not been effective at opening dialogue with white leaders and ended their attempts to integrate the Jackson churches, shifting their efforts to voter registration. But civil rights leaders believed that their efforts had exposed the failure of the white churches to be an effective force in addressing the racial issues that were tearing apart the social and religious fabric of the state.[831]

This recognition, indeed, could be traced to the weakness of arguments put forward by G. T. Gillespie in his address before the Synod of Mississippi in the First Presbyterian Church of Greenwood nearly a decade before. Other factors came into play to cause churches to open their doors. The visits to Galloway in which bishops of the Methodist Church were turned away prompted the denomination to clarify its position opposing segregation in the churches. The Methodist decision likely also influenced the PCUS General Assembly to amend its *Book of Church Order* the following April to forbid racial discrimination. But change in the wider society did not come voluntarily; rather, white Mississippians were moved by the weight of economic pressure, federal law, court orders. Religious moves to desegregate churches or to encourage desegregation in other quarters of the state's life were rare. In fact, the churches were among the last Mississippi institutions to open their doors.[832]

There was some progress within the state's smaller religious denominations. The Rt. Rev. John M. Allin had asked all Episcopal churches in the state to keep their doors open to all, and they had generally complied. As W. J. Cunningham wrote, "They had done this without upset in the congregations, and no priest of that church in Mississippi had lost his pulpit. The bishop stood by every priest and every priest stood by the Church's requirement in race relations." Catholic churches also maintained an open-door policy. On the Sunday in June 1963, when African Americans were turned away from Galloway Methodist, they had walked across the small park to St. Peter's Catholic Cathedral where they were quietly admitted.[833]

Jews and Unitarians had also been generally supportive of racial change, and for these commitments, some of their houses of worship were bombed.[834] These religious communities were small, and while Mississippi's Roman Catholics were not outspoken at first, they later gave leadership for civil rights. Hodding Carter III has written that in the 1950s, the Catholic Church, although committed to integration, did not desegregate Mississippi parochial schools, nor did its priests preach change. Under Bishop Gerow's successor, the Most Rev. Joseph Brunini, the Catholic Church became more outspoken on racial issue, and in 1970, Bishop Brunini had issued a pastoral letter criticizing segregation as "an affront to the informed conscience," and urged that appeals to the patterns of a "dead past" would do nothing but "defraud young Mississippians of their rightful place in tomorrow's world."[835]

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831 Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 140; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 2.

832 Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 12.

833 Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 122-23; Mark Newman, "The Catholic Church in Mississippi and Desegregation, 1963-1973," Journal of Mississippi History 67 (Winter 2005): 331-55.

834 Bauman and Kalin, *The Quiet Voices*, 77.

835 Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night: The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); cf. Donald Cunnigen, "Men and Women of Goodwill: Mississippi's White Liberals" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1987): 359, n. 150; "Mississippi Parochial Schools Will Not Offer 'Refuge From Integration,'" *Religious Herald* (January 22, 1970); Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007).

African Americans Barred from Camp Wrenwoode

As the Jackson church visit campaign was under way, the small UPUSA Presbytery of Mississippi—made up of former Cumberland congregations, which united with the "Northern" Assembly in 1906—was mostly rural. It did little to support positions taken by the General Assembly, even moving to exclude African Americans from its Camp Wrenwoode in 1964.[836] In a somewhat contradictory stance, the PCUS Synod of Mississippi maintained its support for its modest work among the area's African American population even as many of its churches denied admission to African American worshipers. Work among Black people could be done so long as it was conducted in a paternalistic manner, and in a segregated setting. But in the Presbytery of Central Mississippi, even this had fallen by. It noted on July 16, 1964, that "In the geographical area embraced by the Presbytery, there are three small negro [*sic*] churches and one outpost chapel with no active, but one retired negro minister. Our Presbytery has, in the past aided in negro building and sustentation projects but has not done this in some time." On April 15, 1965, the Synod of Mississippi announced plans for two Vacation Church School Institutes for the "Negro Presbyterian churches within its bounds;" the outreach was to be under the supervision of the Rev. J. T. Allen, of Carthage.[837]

Galloway Methodist Opens its Doors to All Worshipers

As Mississippians became more reconciled to racial change, careful efforts by the Rev. W. J. Cunningham and other church leaders to have Galloway Methodist's doors opened finally saw fruition. A policy repealing the 1961 closed-door policy and permitting the admission of African Americans was adopted by Galloway Church's Official Board on January 10, 1966. The vote was 65 to 40. This followed upon a statement by the Jackson Chamber of Commerce asking that businesses comply with federal law. Although the legislature and Citizens' Council strongly objected, the Jackson Chamber's statement was supported by similar statements from the Mississippi Economic Council and the Mississippi Manufacturers Association. Another factor in the Galloway situation was the withdrawal of members who left the congregation for other, more conservative churches. The board of Capitol Street Methodist Church followed Galloway in opening its doors the following March. These moves marked the first crack in the solid opposition against integration among the large, white-controlled religious denominations in Mississippi. The struggle had exacted its toll. That summer W. J. Cunningham accepted an appointment to a church in Decatur, Alabama. In 1980, he published a memoir of his experiences in Mississippi.[838]

Snipers Fired at Moody McDill

By the winter of 1966, the Rev. J. Moody McDill was the last remaining moderate pastor of long service in Jackson, having served Fondren Church for 23 years. He and his family had been subjected to physical threats and violence. On several occasions, a sniper shot at him as he returned to his home at night. To obscure the sniper's line of sight, he had to crawl on his hands and belly to get into the house. McDill believed the gunman who aimed his rifle at him was the same person who assassinated Medgar Evers and shot Unitarian pastor, the Rev. Donald A. Thompson. On another occasion, McDill drove up to his home to find a car speeding out of his driveway. Someone in the car threw a chain out the window at him. McDill described it as a choker chain of the type used to restrain dogs.

Several of McDill's curbside mailboxes were destroyed by cherry bombs. This "terrifying environment," as he described his family's last years in Jackson, became more than he could bear. Novelist Elizabeth Spencer, one of McDill's students when he taught at Belhaven and later a lifelong friend, recalled that in 1966, McDill told

[836] Minutes of the Presbytery of Mississippi, UPUSA (January 25, 1964).

[837] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 15, 1965): 9.

[838] W. J. Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway: One Church's Struggle with Social Change* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980).

her, "I could take threats to myself, but when my wife and children were threatened, I felt it was time to leave." Exhausted from the struggle, McDill accepted a position in March 1966 with the PCUS Board of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia.[839]

Fondren Church Played Unique Role in Mississippi's Struggle for Civil Rights

As time passed, Jackson's Fondren Church became the first and most important predominately white PCUS congregation in Mississippi to adopt an open-door policy with regard to race and, because of this, became Jackson's first truly integrated formerly all-white church. In the later 1960s and '70s, Fondren Church stood almost alone among the state's Presbyterians in its advocacy for civil rights. Its pastor, the Rev. J. Moody McDill and Church Educator Leonora Hudson were courageous in their support for civil rights. Having overcome initial reluctance, the church eventually became known as the state's most progressive PCUS congregation. Small steps led to bigger ones. Located in a diverse and somewhat cosmopolitan neighborhood, the church became a base for progressive racial change. As former Governor William Winter said, "Dr. Moody McDill emphasized that we were not there to serve each other as a self-centered congregation. We were there to get inspiration and understanding from each other of our role in and purpose for life in the larger community." Winter credited Jackson industrialist and Fondren elder Warren A. Hood with positive leadership during this period.[840]

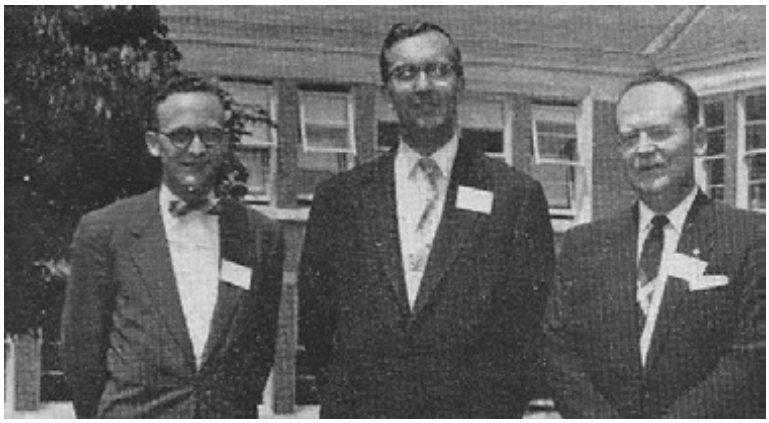
Years later, Leonora Hudson Marquis recalled that Fondren was one of the few Jackson congregations to actively pursue an open-door policy. Because it welcomed African Americans, some nonmembers accused the church of embracing a "pink" (pro-Communist) ideology. Marquis remembered an early move involved the integration of the crib room in the church nursery. Soon, an African American family with twin boys united with the church. African American adults were invited to sing in the choir, and the Women of the Church organization became an integrated body. Because of the respect for McDill and church leaders, integrated groups from the church dined at the Morrison Cafeteria across the street without incident, even though other white-owned Jackson restaurants refused to seat African American diners. A few white members left the congregation on account of its decision to welcome African American worshipers, but most were supportive of McDill and subsequent pastors, all of whom supported the congregation's progressive stance on race and other matters relating to the General Assembly's policies and positions.

Those who supported these efforts had to count the cost. Charles C. Bolton wrote that, "William Winter also lost political allies among Mississippi Presbyterians who saw his continuing membership in a PCUS congregation as 'identifying with what were perceived to be liberal trends in the church.'" Attorney John Hampton Stennis, son of Mississippi's U. S. Senator, served as an elder, along with William Winter.[841]

[839] Elizabeth Spencer, *Landscapes of the Heart: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1997): 293; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 504-05.

[840] *Mid-South Presbyterian* 5 (December 1985): 7.

[841] Interview with Leonora Hudson Marquis (February 5, 2015).



The Revs. A. H. Freundt, Jr. (left), instructor at Belhaven, and the Rev. J. Moody McDill (right), pastor at Jackson's Fondren Church, took part in a a 1957 Calvin Colloquium in Grand Rapids, Michigan. McDill was a widely published Calvin scholar. While Freundt initially opposed civil rights, McDill was hopeful for change. As time went on, both played key roles in the struggles for racial justice and adoption of broader theological views during the tumultuous 1960s.

Further Results of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign

The First Baptist Church of Jackson did not officially retract its segregation policy until 1973. Media pressure eventually brought change within the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Early on a Sunday morning in 1973, cameras from Jackson television station WLBT, recently placed under new management, broadcast pictures of church deacons turning a racially mixed group of worshipers away. These powerful images had their effect and soon the church doors were opened to all who wished to attend services.[842] Other churches never revisited their segregation policies. They simply remained on the books with other un-enforced rules, such as provisions for the punishment of persons who engaged in dancing. As Dalton Lyon concluded, "Integration did not come to Mississippi through the doors of churches [as activists had hoped] because of the fierce determination by segregationists to protect their last sanctuary."[843] William Winter told Lyon that by testing "the one institution that should have stepped up," the Jackson church visits "pricked at the heart of Christianity—the heart of southern religion." Later historians have said the Jackson church visit campaign forms one of the important crises of American religious history. A recent historian, Pete Daniel, has concluded that the large-scale inaction of white ministers and church people constituted one of the "lost revolutions" in post-*Brown* America.[844]

As W. J. Cunningham remarked some years after these events, "It is significant that churches did not lead the way to the new era; it was business institutions that pointed the way, though some of the leaders involved were persons of deep religious motivation." Cunningham believed that "the church could not change the culture; the culture changed and carried the church along with it. Also, conscience was at work. Some who had been guarding the doors began to feel an inner sense of wrongness at what they had been doing. One of the ushers who had turned away African Americans on the first fateful Sunday in June 1963 confessed, 'I don't want to turn anyone away anymore.'"[845]

In 2004, Galloway invited the Rev. Ross Oliver, the white general secretary of the Methodist Church of South

[842] Kay Mills, *Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case that Transformed Television* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004): 171; Mark Newman, "The Mississippi Baptist Convention and Desegregation, 1945-1980," *Journal of Mississippi History* 59 (Spring 1997): 1-31; Mark Newman, Getting Right with God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

[843] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 461, 510.

[844] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 519; See Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Smithsonian National Museum of National History, 2000).

[845] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 5; Cunningham, *Agony at Galloway*, 121.

Africa, to serve as their pastor. He came to Jackson to bring his 24 years' experience of ministry in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa to bear on "racial reconciliation and combating economic disparity" in Mississippi. Oliver had been a vigorous opponent of the oppressive actions of the former white-majority government in South Africa. From his perspective as a pastor, he reached the conclusion that, "My struggle here is that the church has abdicated its responsibility largely in terms of the fundamental social issues, those things that are deeply affecting life in Mississippi." He returned to South Africa four years later.[846]

PCUS *Book of Church Order* Amended to Forbid Segregation

Events in Mississippi and elsewhere across the South led to overtures to amend the PCUS *Book of Church Order* to make explicit the *Confession of Faith's* affirmation that race should not be a factor in welcoming persons for worship or membership. Early in 1964, West Virginia's Montgomery Presbytery asked the PCUS Assembly to address the matter of whether it was "proper for a Session . . . to exclude persons from public worship at the Lord's house on the grounds of race, color, or class." In response, the 1964 Assembly stated that in its opinion, the constitution of the Church, as interpreted from 1865 onward, precluded any exclusion of persons from public worship solely on the basis of race or color. To make this position unmistakably clear, it recommended that the Directory for Worship be amended by adding a sentence to read that, "No one shall be excluded from public worship in the Lord's house on the grounds of race, color, or class" (Paragraph 201-5).[847]

The amendment was favored by 69 of the PCUS presbyteries, with 11 opposed. It was officially adopted at the 1965 Assembly. The ratification of the amendment was a dramatic step in the life of the PCUS. The 1964 Assembly also voted to hold future assemblies only in churches that maintained open-door policies. They elected to delay implementation of the rule for three years because the Assembly had already accepted an invitation to meet the following year in the Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, which had a segregationist policy. The commissioners did ask the Second Church to remove its racial barriers ahead of the 1965 meeting.

Conservatives Held that Book of Order Amendment Abridged Power of Local Sessions

PCUS conservatives, however, held that the *Book of Church Order* amendment abridged the powers of local sessions. On October 15, 1964, Central Mississippi Presbytery voted 26 to 5 against the amendment to *The Book of Church Order*. The proposed amendment was also answered in the negative by South Mississippi Presbytery by a vote of 58 to 21. Conservatives argued against the amendment on the ground that it added "a non-biblical" requirement to church admission and that it took from and that it took from sessions a power reserved to them to determine the fitness of those who presented themselves for worship. Unlike the changes enacted by the Methodist General Conference that declared that "all . . . be eligible to attend its worship services . . . *and be admitted into . . .membership*" (italics added), the 1964 Presbyterian amendment did not mention admission into church membership.

Events in Memphis Influenced Mississippi Presbyterians

Forums for interracial cooperation had existed in Memphis since the 1940s, and a Committee on Community Relations had been formed in the late 1950s with the Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, pastor of the city's Idlewild Presbyterian Church, as a charter member. The committee worked behind the scenes to achieve voluntary integration before court-ordered change provoked resistance. One observer credited Jones as the moving force in bringing white city leaders into the effort. In the early 1960s, Memphis State University, the public library, zoo, parks, museums, city buses, public schools, and downtown restaurants were desegregated nonviolently. Churches, however, were

[846] Cited in Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed* Society, 82.

[847] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 79.

another matter. As in the Synod of Mississippi, Memphis Presbyterians sponsored an annual Area Presbyterian Leadership School for lay workers, usually at Idlewild Church. It had for many years included representatives from the city's two African American Presbyterian congregations. In the late 1950s, several Memphis congregations withdrew support for the event on the ground that Blacks were present. Idlewild continued its support. Jones later remarked that, "Idlewild lost some members because of the positions that we took, but generally we moved with tranquility because the session never wavered in its determination to do the right thing."[848]

As Congress debated the Civil Rights Act, the 1964 PCUS Assembly ratified an amendment to its *Book of Church Order* that "no one shall be excluded from participation in public worship in the Lord's house on the grounds of race, color, or class." Leading the opposition in the Senate was Majority Leader Richard B. Russell (D-Georgia), brother of the Rev. Henry E. Russell, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis. On this as other occasions, the actions of Memphis churches influenced Mississippi Presbyterians, and the city's prestigious Second Presbyterian Church—like Galloway Methodist in Jackson, was the largest congregation of its denomination in the state. It included many leaders who had ties with Mississippi and its churches. The events in Memphis carried added significance, not only because of the church's large membership but also because of its former pastor, the PCUS General Assembly moderator, the Rev. Felix B. Gear.[849]

Attempts by racially mixed groups to visit Memphis churches paralleled the efforts going on in Jackson, Mississippi. Though Memphis' Idlewild Church had opened its doors to all worshipers in the summer of 1960, a much more complicated situation developed at Second Church four years later on March 22, 1964, when Jim Bullock brought two African American Southwestern Students, Joe Purdy and Caroyn Purdy McGhee, to visit the Sunday service. Thinking that Purdy might be one of the many foreign missionaries the church supported, an usher asked Purdy if he was from Africa. Finding that he was not, Purdy and Bullock were refused admission.

Bullock, a child of the manse, was the son of the Rev. James Randolph Bullock, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Tennessee, which had welcomed Black worshipers when they visited in 1958. The elder Bullock firmly supported his son's efforts in Memphis. The younger Bullock remembered the presence of uniformed law enforcement officers with guns and nightsticks at the church, as did Dr. Vasco Smith and his wife, Maxine, who were leaders in the city's civil rights community. Smith, a Memphis dentist, was an elder in Parkway Gardens Church, a pre-dominately African American PCUS congregation. Following this, mixed groups sought unsuccessfully to worship at Second Presbyterian for the next seven Sundays. A weekly drama unfolded with five to 40 well-dressed students seeking to visit. They were met by a line of somber faced elders and deacons determined to keep them out, resulting in what Joel Alvis has called "the most dramatic confrontation by the [PCUS] General Assembly over segregated facilities."[850]

Segregationists in Second Church took umbrage that Southwestern students were involved in the attempts to integrate their church services. Many had attended the city's Presbyterian college years before. A photographer was engaged to take pictures of the visiting students, which were mailed to the Rev. Jameson Jones, the academic dean. (Jones, a son of the First Church in Corinth, was a member of St. Andrew Presbytery and the brother of the Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, pastor of the city's Idlewild Presbyterian Church.) Prints were also mailed to the students' parents. Several parents, including the Rev. C. Rodney Sunday, stepfather of one of the students and a Presbyterian pastor in Houston, Texas, who wrote back to Second Church that he was pleased his son had taken the implications of his home teaching so seriously. Sunday wrote that the Church is "Christ's church, not ours, [and] that we must do what we believed He would want us to do. And we felt that He would not ever want anyone barred from His Church."

A mother of another student wrote to the photographer that she was "so glad that you sent me the picture of Hayden and his friend attending a church service. This picture will definitely be one of the most cherished ones

[848] Perre Magness, *A History of Idlewild Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, 1890-1990* (Memphis: Mercury Printing, 1990): 54-55, 61.

[849] Albert Bruce Curry, *History of the Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, Tennessee* (Memphis: Adams Printing, 1936); E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:549-50.

[850] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 56, 125-26. 149; Alvis, 101-102.

in the album. And I expect he will show it to his children, as they come along, with a degree of justifiable pride." She said that "his father and I are proud of him. Not every young man is so courageously loyal to Christ that he is willing to undergo ridicule, abuse, and insults because of his Christian convictions."[851]

Second Church's session had put rules in place, October 7, 1957, restricting the admission of African Americans to its services. On April 29, 1964, the elders issued a letter to the congregation, reiterating the session's 1957 Statement of Policy, advising that "As Christ in spectacular fashion denounced the use of the Lord's house by money changers, so we believe your Session has the duty to reject attempts to make this congregation a cats-paw in the hands of those seeking to advance a secular position, through demonstration and maneuver which can then be nationally publicized." Pressure was brought to bear on Southwestern president Peyton Nallie Rhodes. According to Jameson Jones, when threats were made in the college's boardroom of severe cuts in giving, Rhodes coolly declared that "The College is not for sale."[852]

The Synod of Tennessee took note of events at Second Church and resolved that, "Christ did not hesitate to cut across the social customs of segregation of His day. . . . To exclude from worship, therefore, any believer, whether Black or white, is to exclude the Christ who dwells within him." The synod asserted that defiance of lawful injunctions from the higher church courts amounted to a repudiation of the ordination vows, bringing "ecclesiastical anarchy and congregationalism."[853]

Paul Tudor Jones, a member of Southwestern's graduating class of 1932, addressed the synod meeting that year, outlining the need to provide students an opportunity for developing "the habit of making decisions in the context of the highest Christian values," and urging that this must be free from "the bludgeoning shadow of churchmen who say to the church related college—no more of my money unless you teach sociology like my sainted father believed; no more of my money unless you teach the anthropology for which my God-fearing grandfather fell under the Confederate flag at Shiloh."[854]

Several elders and deacons of Second Church made an effort to have all congregations in the Memphis Presbytery join their session's resolve to prohibit integrated services. Idlewild's session overtured the presbytery to admonish the supporters of this effort to cease signing their communications as elders or deacons in a particular church. Several Memphis congregations—Buntyn, Evergreen, and Whitehaven—joined Idlewild's session in opposing Second Church's segregation policy.[855]

Protests resulted from supporters of desegregation across the country when it became known that the 1965 PCUS Assembly would be at Second Church. Resolutions were introduced at the 1964 Assembly to move the meeting unless the congregation adopted an open-seating policy. The Assembly, having sent down an amendment to the Book of Order, forbidding the exclusion of any from worship on the basis of race or color, adopted a specific request to the Second Church of Memphis that,

> In view of the pronouncements of this 104th General Assembly, and those of previous Assemblies and out of consideration for the feelings of our Negro and white commissioners who feel keenly on the issue of Christian unity and racial justice, and in view of the gravity of the racial struggle in the world, we request and urge the Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, Tennessee, to reconsider any policies or pronouncements of its own which may be inconsistent with our Assembly's position on race and Christian unity, and which thereby may be an embarrassment to our Church.[856]

As Stephen Haynes, a historian of these events, wrote, "This request, along with overwhelming passage of a non-exclusion amendment to the Church's constitution, sent the clear message that SPC's refusal to admit Black

[851] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 60-62, 199.
[852] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 64.
[853] Minutes of the Synod of Tennessee (PCUS, June 15-17, 1964): 17.
[854] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 3.
[855] Magness, *History of Idlewild Presbyterian Church,* 55.
[856] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 1:76-77.

worshipers was unacceptable to a majority of those elected to speak for the denomination." Conservative leaders in the Second Church, for their part, believed that "the question of seating Negroes in the congregation should not be forced by the proposed [1965] meeting of the Assembly."[857]

The 1964 Assembly, meeting some months prior to Congressional enactment of sweeping civil rights legislation, adopted a Pastoral Letter on Race, which addressed the massive effort of those seeking racial change, a situation it noted was proving to be painful in the South and "especially to its churches." The Assembly approved the "demonstrative" approach to achieving justice, observing that the marching, picketing, and boycotting conducted by civil rights advocates have been "remarkably peaceful and forceful." It recognized that ministers had been forced from their pulpits or experienced other kinds of harassment because they had complied with the expressed views of the Assembly and urged sessions to support and defend their pastors as they proclaimed the Word of God, even if this ran counter to community mores and traditions. Ben Lacy Rose wrote in *The Presbyterian Survey* that, "When civil laws run contrary to the law of God, we have the necessary Christian duty of disobeying them."[858]

Though assurances had been given that Assembly meetings and meals would be fully integrated, many throughout the Assembly were disturbed that the Second Church session apparently intended to continue excluding African Americans from its regular services and activities. Several presbyteries and synods, including the Presbytery of Memphis, urged the Second Presbyterian session to change its policy, as did its pastors, but a majority of the elders refused. Following the 1964 Assembly, the session of Second Church met, and by a margin of four to one, it reiterated its seven-year restriction under which no African American could be admitted to the Sunday services of the church. Accounts of the ongoing controversy in the Memphis newspapers emphasized the fact that an African American slave had been a charter member when the congregation was organized in 1844.[859]

PCUS Foreign Missionaries Appealed for Racial Change at Home

The representation of interracial work and worship portrayed in PCUS missionary publications contrasted sharply with the assumed segregation in most aspects of American life, and these publications gave rare views into those parts of the world where white Americans saw the competence of persons of color and in which interracial activity was treated as normal and routine.[860]

In April 1964, 202 PCUS missionaries serving in places as diverse as the Congo, Rhodesia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, published an open letter to the General Assembly, advising that the church visit situation seriously undermined their work: "When a picture of Negroes being turned away from a white church is front-page news around the world . . . non-Christians [develop] serious doubts about the validity of the gospel. The failure of our church to implement actively and concretely its pronouncements on race relations in the whole of its life and work has damaged the witness to God's impartial love in Christ. Our failures here give God's enemies cause to blaspheme his name, are a source of perplexity to Christians in many lands and hamper the evangelistic outreach of the church." The missionaries urged "the opening of the doors and fellowship of all churches to any person who comes to worship." The letter was signed by two missionaries supported directly by Second Presbyterian Church.

That autumn 32 more PCUS missionaries added their signatures to this appeal. Among the signers were several missionaries from Mississippi, including Sarah Barry, Paul Crane, and Robert and Frances Fitler. Also signing was Clara H. (Mrs. George R.) Stuart Jr., whose husband would later serve as pastor of the Hernando Church in Mississippi. That summer, when the petition was presented to the General Assembly, 32 newly commissioned missionaries added their names. Altogether, 251 PCUS missionaries affixed their signatures to the call. One of

[857] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 93. Horace Hull to J. McDowell Richards, cited in Lucas, *For a Continuing* Church, 196-97. Hull was a prominent elder in Second Presbyterian Church.

[858] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964): 153-55; *Presbyterian Survey* (July 1964): 12-13.

[859] "Relocated Assembly," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (February 8, 1965): 8.

[860] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 55.

the missioners later wrote from Congo, noting that the letter of the missionaries had been adopted in the wake of a massacre of Christians by rebel forces in which several Methodist and Plymouth Brethren missionaries, as well as Congolese church leaders, had been abducted. Hundreds of indigenous Christians had been persecuted or put to death, "their only sin being their education or their contact with the white man." The Presbyterian missionaries, meeting at Luluabourg, covenanted together to stay at their posts "and live under whatever government or regime might emerge." This was the context, said William H. Crane, out of which the letter of the 202 had been written. He said, "The decision of the missionaries in Congo to stay and face whatever was in store for them under a regime in which racial hostility was released in a flood tide across the Congo is a dramatic example of the church's response to her true vocation, the calling to be a servant in obedience to her Head, the Servant Lord, who was obedient to the will of his Father even unto death. . . . The letter from the Congo reminds us again that this is the normal calling of the church, whether in Congo or in America, and that accommodation to a culture, or to the security of a traditional way of life, can be an act of basic infidelity to the Lord of the Church under whose judgment and grace alone the church is allowed to live."[861]

Memphis' Second Church had always contributed liberally toward mission work in Africa and was, indeed, one of the most generous PCUS congregations in support of the African mission enterprise. It commissioned six new missionaries for work in Africa at its annual World Missions Conference in January 1964. But speakers at this event warned that the church's exclusionary policies threatened the effectiveness of the congregation's missionary appeal. As the church had stated in its segregation policy of 1957, the congregation had proven itself "for over 100 years to be a benefactor of mankind over the whole world, carrying the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every man [*sic*], regardless of race, color or creed." But PCUS missionaries perceived that this benefaction was paternalistic and that the donors were not willing to worship with such persons in their own house of prayer. *The Memphis Press-Scimitar* also expressed disapproval, writing on January 30 that, "It is embarrassing to a great church, that the race matter had not been settled before missionary leaders gathered at the church to celebrate preaching the gospel to 'all mankind, regardless of color.'"[862]

In November 1964, the 119 members of the PCUS mission force in the Congo sent an open letter to the denomination and its members, noting that "the question of the place of meeting of the 1965 General Assembly points up the fact that the action of one session can undo the good effects of our Assembly pronouncements." The missionaries declared that the Memphis situation presented the danger "that certain actions, or failure to act, may wound your brothers, cheer the enemies of the gospel and bring discredit to the name of Christ."[863]

Earlier that year, the Rev. Lawrence F. Haygood, pastor of the small Parkway Gardens Presbyterian Church, Memphis' only African American PCUS congregation, and one of the first African Americans to graduate from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, preached a sermon to explain why the desegregation of religious worship in America was crucial to the integrity of the church's international work. He said that "To pour millions of dollars into Africa, Asia, and South America for mission purposes while the Negro in America continues to be turned away from our church doors is sheer hypocrisy." "How can we tell the world of the love of God and the love of neighbor?" asked Haygood, who later served as chaplain of Stillman College, "when we so obviously refuse to practice what we preach?" Perhaps casting an eye toward the wealthy but segregated Second Presbyterian congregation about a mile away, Haygood said that "The most effective witness that we can make to the world is now how much material wealth we contribute to the world missionary enterprise, but the establishment of racially inclusive fellowships at the grassroots level."[864]

In the fall of 1964, the Rev. J. Millen Darnell, whose family had been active in Second Church since the 1890s,

[861] "202 Missionaries Appeal to their Home Church," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (April 27, 1964): 5-6; 146 (August 10, 1964): 2; "Nineteen [Missionaries] from Brazil," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (August 10, 1964): 2; "Outgoing Missionaries Sign Plea to the Church," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (September 7, 1964): 2; William H. Crane, "Background of a Letter," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (November 23, 1964): 4.

[862] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 107, 120.

[863] *Presbyterian Survey* (November 1964): 43.

[864] Lawrence F. Haygood, "For an Inclusive Church," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (April 20, 1964): 5-6.

returned to Memphis on furlough from his service as a missionary in Ecuador. He had lived in the Mississippi Delta and had come to believe segregation was wrong. He visited members of the Second Church session, appealing for a relaxation in its Negro-exclusion policy.[865]

Union Seminary Professor John H. Leith Lodges Charge of Segregationist Apostasy

The Rev. John H. Leith, professor of theology in Union Seminary, Richmond, spoke directly to Memphians and their pastor, having served many years with the Rev. Henry E. Russell when they were members of East Alabama Presbytery. Leith had been a member of the 1956 committee in East Alabama Presbytery that declared that "There is no scriptural basis for racial segregation in the Church." He wrote in an *Outlook* editorial published while the 1964 Assembly was in session, declaring that,

> A doctrinaire liberalism that refuses to face the fact that there are racial differences, particularly in cultural, social and economic areas of life is irresponsible. A conservative orthodoxy that demands that these differences be regarded as the final fact and refuses to recognize its own guilt for some, at least, of these facts is likewise irresponsible. . . . There is, however, one issue that is singularly free from complexity or complication. This is the issue that arises when the question of race is brought into the life of the Church itself and made a condition for membership or worship. At this point particularly the race issue becomes a clear-cut theological question. It is the high tenet of our faith that Jesus Christ is Lord, that he is the sole lawgiver in Zion. Moreover, as Protestants we have always said that the Church exists where the word is rightly preached and believed and where the sacraments are rightly administered. For this reason it is our highest conviction that in the church only one thing matters: faith in Jesus Christ and love for one's fellowman. Therefore, when race is made a condition of worship, of admission to the Lord's Table, we deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ and forfeit the right to his name. It is simply not possible to contend that the word is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered when race is made a condition for hearing the Word and receiving the sacrament.

For this reason, Leith believed the General Assembly should not be held in a church that "declines, with force, to open its doors to all who seek to worship there" and asserted that when race was made a condition for membership or worship, "the line is clearly drawn between apostasy and obedience, between heresy and orthodoxy, between pretentious fraud and the reality of the Church."[866]

Memphis Pastors Defy Session

Pressure against the Memphis congregation grew from one end of the PCUS to the other. During the summer of 1964, the Hanover Presbytery in Virginia, as well as the Synod of Texas took note of the situation existing in Memphis and urged Second Church to make changes. By the end of June (as efforts to pass the civil rights bill in the Congress rose to a fever pitch, with Senator Russell leading a Southern filibuster), nine synods and presbyteries appealed to the Second Church session, as did representatives of each PCUS seminary, many of the church colleges, the denominational Westminster Fellowship Council (representing PCUS students on state college campuses), as well as missionaries on the foreign field. The editor of *The Presbyterian Outlook* wrote that, in this regard, "the performance of the officers of the Second Church has been a glaring exception."[867]

The kneel-ins at Second Church resumed in January 1965. Pressure increased from various quarters of the denomination and from persons interested beyond the congregation's walls. *The Press-Scimitar* editorialized on

[865] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 113-14.

[866] John H. Leith, "The Church and Race," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (July 27, 1964): 6.

[867] *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (November 9, 1964): 3; 146 (May 18, 1964): 8.

January 26 that, "It will be good news, when Second Church joins other Memphis churches which have opened their doors to Negroes." Letters to the editor chastised the newspaper for its temerity in offering advice as to decisions congregations made concerning the use of their "private property." The pastors of the church, who had hesitated throughout 1964, were moved to action. On January 21, Second Church's pastor, the Rev. Henry E. Russell, joined by associate pastors C. Phil Esty and W. James Hazelwood and assistant pastor Edward J. Knox, issued an open letter to the congregation. It said,

> Some of our members have been asking for months how your ministers feel about the turning away of people from our Church. Your pastors want the congregation to know that we cannot in Christian conscience approve of the policy of excluding people from our worship services. We cannot find support for this policy in the Word of God. We cannot find support for it in the history of our beloved congregation, and this policy is out of harmony with our Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly.

The letter also referenced the amendment to the *Book of Church Order* put forward at the 1964 General Assembly.[868]

By all accounts, Russell had until this time been a popular and beloved pastor. The Rev. Phil Esty later served as pastor of Jackson's Covenant Presbyterian Church, then perceived as one of that city's racially moderate congregations. On January 24, Russell addressed the issue from the pulpit. He declared that by continuing to exclude African Americans, Second Church was out of accord not only with its own history and the pronouncements of presbyteries, synods, and General Assemblies, but also with the Bible itself. Whatever part of the Bible one turned to, scripture testified with one voice to God's nondiscriminatory invitation. He invoked Isaiah 56:7, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people," and Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." He reminded his hearers that "God is no respecter of persons" and warned those who presumed to judge others. He concluded by saying that "The publicity given in the Congo of our action cripples the work of Christ." But that morning, African Americans were turned away.

The Presbytery of Memphis met on January 26 and directed the session of Second Church to meet no later than February 1 to consider the presbytery's request that it bring its policies into accord with General Assembly guidelines. The presbytery, of course, had the power to suspend both the pastor and elders of the church. On February 8, by a vote of 23 to 16, the session declined to comply with the instruction of the presbytery that it receive anyone who wished to worship and that it remove a formal restriction by which African Americans were kept from worshiping there. A statement was issued, stating that the church's policy had been misunderstood, that no "true worshiper" had been turned away, and that "only those who came to test, demonstrate, and act as busybodies" had been turned away. Russell told *The Presbyterian Outlook* that the session's action was "imprudent" and "untenable."[869]

Members of the congregation who supported their pastors' stand drew up a petition to limit the terms of the elders and the Board of Deacons and called upon the session to remove any policy limitations restricting those who were admitted to worship. The petition stated that the objectives of its supporters were to, "Remain part of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. [by complying with General Assembly policies and directives]; open our church doors to public worship and remove the guards from God's house; and restore the witness of our church to its former place in the community, nation and world."

On February 14, the Sunday after the session's letter of dissent was mailed to the congregation, Russell made a preliminary statement to the congregation, declaring that he had received word that charges (by segregationists) were to be filed against him in the presbytery but had received assurances that if he would seek to "quell the rebellion" of Accord Committee (the petitioners), they would be withheld. He stated his view that the petitioners' activity was in line with church procedure, "a democratic expression." Russell continued, "I

[868] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 69, 116-17.

[869] *Memphis Press-Scimitar* (February 9, 1965); "Memphis Session Rejects Presbytery Requirement," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (February 22, 1965): 3; Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 193-95, 197-99.

know of no church in this community which does not admit any who come, regardless of race or class, except ours. Not only Presbyterian, U.S., churches, but all those of other denominations that I know of, open their doors to all—except ours, as a result of our obdurate Session majority. . . . We are at a crisis on this Race Relations Sunday. . . . The present crisis presents us with an opportunity to lift Christ up."[870] On the day following Russell's statement, following a five-hour meeting, the session voted to modify its seven-year restriction by permitting African American worshipers to sit in a designated area. The Rev. Phil Esty told the press that he supposed this meant the balcony.[871]

General Assembly Meeting Moved from Memphis

Russell's sermon and the presbytery's directive proved moot, for on January 23, 1965, the Rev. Felix B. Gear, dean and professor of theology at Columbia Seminary, exercising his prerogative as moderator of the General Assembly, had drafted a letter to the Second Church session, relocating the upcoming sessions of the General Assembly from Memphis to Montreat. Gear was a former pastor of Second Church (1943-1947); he also had served in Mississippi as pastor at Columbia and McComb—stated that had delayed as long as possible to give the church a chance to work through its issues, but the time had come when arrangements had to be made. He wrote that he took action only after "consultation with hundreds of people in our Church and mission fields." Gear believed that his action was necessary because the controversy concerned "nothing less than the nature of the Church." Yet, he knew that conservatives might interpret the situation as recrimination against a congregation that did not accept the denomination's social agenda.[872]

The Presbyterian Journal indeed saw a malevolent design in Gear's decision. It accepted the Second Church session's opposition to "the use of church buildings as theaters for demonstrations." *The Journal* sympathized with the congregation as a victim of "liberal intolerance."[873]

Gear received many complaints and drafted a letter of reply, which read,

> I would respectfully point out that . . . the Presbyterian Church has never officially sanctioned segregated churches. . . . Further, at no time has the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. ever upheld the exclusion of a Negro from a church court or from membership on the ground of color or race. . . . Because we have accepted the policy of segregation for so many years, we have come to think that the Presbyterian Church is actually a segregated church constitutionally—this has never been true.

To those who believed otherwise, Gear mailed a copy of the 1865 General Assembly resolution that stated the denomination's position.[874]

Gear's unprecedented action was highly embarrassing to Second Church and pushed forward earlier efforts for change. The previous November, 12 of the congregation's deacons had sent a letter to the session, stating that, "As officers who are in part responsible for our church's witness, we feel that a maintenance of our present policy of barring anyone from general worship services inevitably will bring calamitous injury to Second Church."

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[870] "Petition Circulated in Memphis 2[d] Church," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (March 1, 1965): 3-4; Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 197-202.

[871] *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (February 22, 1965): 3.

[872] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 195.

[873] *Presbyterian Journal* 23 (February 10, 1965).

[874] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 196. The only official pronouncement by the PCUS Assembly regarding worship inclusive of different races prior to the 1960s was adopted in 1865. It stressed "the advantages of the colored people and the white being united together in the worship of God." Of course, the presence of African American worshipers, as envisioned then, involved a subordinate position for them, with separate seating arrangements, and the assumption that Blacks would neither preach to whites, nor sing with them in choirs, and when the Holy Communion was administered, the Black worshipers would be served last.

They asked that the "present rigid, untenable policy be altered." In early 1965, several members of the diaconate perceived that the congregation would likely support change though a majority of the session would not. Using a strategy used in many congregations to effect change based on the addition of provisions in *The Book of Church Order*, permitting limited terms of service for church officers, a petition was circulated to institute a system of officer rotation, as permitted by *The Book of Church Order*. It was necessary that the petition gather the signatures of one-fourth of the church's members.[875]

Impetus for change may also have come from the congregation's Women of the Church organization, as it had in 1957, when women's leaders sought permission to include the African American women of the Memphis Presbytery in a presbyterial event to be held at the church. The official history of Second Church, published in 1971, made no history of the kneel-ins, although a 1964 congregational history submitted by the Women of the Church under the auspices of the Montreat Historical Foundation's local history program devoted eight pages to the crisis. The author, Geneva Tayloe (Mrs. K. William) Chandler, stated that an invitation "to all who sin and need a Saviour . . . this Church opens the door and makes free a place, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, says 'Welcome!'" appeared at the head of the worship bulletin each Sunday, but commented that "Second Presbyterian Church comes to wonder in this trying year of 1964 if this expressed invitation is the true feeling of the congregation or not."[876]

Rotation of church officers was instituted following a ferocious congregational debate. The meeting was held on February 28, 1965, following a sermon in which Russell reminded hearers that Jesus was considered scandalous for the way he "fraternized with publicans and sinners and other people despised by many." The members voted by ballot. As the Rev. Elizabeth "Lib" Caldwell, then a high school student and later a professor in McCormick Theological Seminary recalled, "There was "a lot of shouting, a lot of noise. I mean, normally those congregational meetings were always tidy. But this was not tidy. . . . I don't know when I realized it, but at some point, I knew this was not about rotation of elders. It was something much more." The change, however, was approved by a large majority.[877]

Second Presbyterian Divides

As was the case in Mississippi, some found the changes impossible to accept. Segregationist session members, including Horace Hull, a well-known automobile dealer and a frequent contributor to *The Presbyterian Journal*, as well as some 340 members, withdrew to organize the Independent Presbyterian Church of Memphis. The first services were conducted by the Rev. Leonard T. Van Horn, a former professor at Belhaven, then teaching at French Camp Academy. He was a former minister in the PCUS who had left the denomination "out of conviction" because of concerns about its perceived liberalism. The Rev. James E. Moore, pastor of the Macon and Center Point Churches, was later dismissed from Central Mississippi Presbytery to the care of the Independent Church of Memphis to serve as one of its pastors. (There was no provision in the PCUS *Book of Church Order* for dismissal of a minister to the "care of a congregation," or for the organization, without presbytery's authorization, of an

[875] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 114-15, 199.

[876] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 117-20. Cf. Charles C. Gillespie, *A History of the Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, Tennessee, 1844-1971* (Memphis: Second Presbyterian Church, 1971).

[877] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 173, 202-204.

"independent" Presbyterian church.)[878] The movement toward formation of a new congregation was hindered by the fact that none of the pastors at Second Presbyterian chose to follow the departing members.[879]

The Memphis Commercial Appeal identified many of the new congregation's organizers as "persons who had opposed integration at Second Presbyterian" and referred to the new church's "segregation policy." While claiming the need to "preserve and perpetuate" the historic Presbyterian profession of faith in Memphis and "believing that at the time there was no existing Presbyterian denomination in Memphis that was faithful to the historic Reformed Faith," the congregational bylaws (Article III, paragraph ii) also stated that,

> Believing that the scriptures teach that the separation of nations, peoples and groups will preserve the peace, purity and unity of the Church, it is, therefore, the will of this Church that its members and those visiting the Church, its worship services, and all of its activities, shall be compatible with the congregation."

Other concerns listed by organizers included the ordination of women, PCUS support for the National Council of Churches, changes in standards for divorce, and as well as the denomination's preoccupation with "sociological matters." The new congregation was governed by an 11-member session, all-male, and which did not rotate. The Independent Church grew rapidly, and after the Presbyterian Church in America was formed, the congregation's ministers held membership in the PCA's Covenant Presbytery. The church was received by that body in 2000, becoming the presbytery's largest congregation. The Independent Church revised its bylaws in 1985 and endorsed the PCA's pastoral letter on "The Gospel and Race" in 2010.[880]

As the Second Church moved toward resolution of its conflicts, *The Presbyterian Journal* opined that some in the PCUS did not wish to see a "triumph of reconciliation" in Second Church. "It is hard to avoid the feeling, that the most vocal minority within the Church—the 'young Turks' of liberal bent—are out to alienate and divide, to punish and to destroy. And what better target than a great evangelical congregation with a tremendous (and embarrassing) evangelistic and missionary testimony?" At least one segregationist member in the nearby Holly Springs Church in Mississippi transferred his membership to the new Memphis congregation.[881]

Second Presbyterian Church quickly revised its seating policy and opened its doors to all, and the General Assembly welcomed its invitation to meet there in a subsequent year. The congregation hosted a meeting of the PCUS Assembly in 1970. In 2014, Second Church initiated efforts toward racial reconciliation, welcoming white participants, such as Jim Bullock, the white Southwestern student who participated in the "kneel-ins" as well as family members of his African American friend Joe Purdy. Bullock had become a Presbyterian minister; Purdy was a businessman. He died in 2001.[882]

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[878] At least two mother Independent Presbyterian Churches exist in the American South, neither of which was founded to perpetuate racial segregation. The first, in Savannah, Georgia, was so-named because when it was organized in 1755, it was too far away from other congregations to establish a presbytery. The arrangement proved satisfactory to the congregation which has continued the arrangement, governed, as it were, by its "parochial presbytery," the session. The church calls its pastors from the established Presbyterian denominations in which they hold membership. The Independent Presbyterian Church of Birmingham was organized in 1915, the result of a doctrinal quarrel within an existing PCUS congregation. Though initially independent, in 1920 it was received into the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., the "Northern Assembly," and in 1983 became part of the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Independent Presbyterian Church of Memphis aligned with the PCA in 2000.

[879] "'Independent' Church Is Forming in Memphis," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (March 29, 1965): 14; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 16, 1969): 16.

[880] *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (March 15, 1965): 20; Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 204-05, 229-30, 242-43.

[881] *Presbyterian Journal* 23 (February 10, 1965).

[882] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1964), 1:79; "Memphis 1965," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (April 27, 1964): 8; "Bars Up at Memphis Second," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (May 11, 1964): 8; "Memphis Second," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (May 18, 1964): 8; Carl Pritchett, "What Happened at Memphis," *FOCUS—Newsletter of A [PCUS] Fellowship of Concern* (May 22, 1964): 9; K. W. Cook, "General Assembly Is Moved from Second Presbyterian," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*

The change came at a high price. Second Presbyterian, like Galloway Methodist in Jackson, suffered a damaging schism in order to achieve the admission of worshipers without regard to race. In both cases, the new congregations retained the historic denominational name (i.e., "Presbyterian" or Methodist") while asserting autonomy from the mother denomination.[883]

African American Worshipers Also Barred in Montgomery, Alabama

Similar struggles were under way during this time at Montgomery, Alabama's Trinity Presby-terian Church. The congregation, Montgomery's largest Presbyterian Church, had been served by the Rev. Henry E. Russell prior to his call to Second Church in Memphis. In June 1957, that church's session had addressed a letter to the PCUS Board of Christian Education protesting the discussion of "racial and other liberal issues" in church publications, and when the 1964 General Assembly directed East Alabama Presbytery to incorporate the African American congregations within its bounds from the former all-Negro synod, there was overwhelming opposition from Trinity Church's elders. Thus, when six African American students presented themselves for worship, the deacons met them at the door, and determining that they were there "for sociological causes"—as Trinity Presbyterian's pastor, the Rev. Robert Strong put it—they turned them away. That same Sunday, a racially mixed group participated in a communion service at Memorial Presbyterian Church in the same city. The next week, April 11, which was Palm Sunday, African Americans were refused entrance at Montgomery's First Presbyterian and Frazer Memorial Methodist churches. In his sermon that day, Strong, who was a native of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Westminster Seminary, compared the contemporary happenings to actions of Christ during his final week in Jerusalem. While he stated that African Americans would be welcome, "if it were genuinely the case that their motive in coming was a desire to seek the Lord," he judged that "sociological demonstrators are not sincere in their protestation that they have come to worship and . . . therefore are not welcome at Trinity Church."

Strong, who was later to be a professor of preaching in Jackson's Reformed Seminary, used the same text for his sermon as his predecessor Henry Russell had used earlier that year in Second Church, Memphis, but Strong interpreted the passage in a very different way. He explained, "When our Lord drove the profaners of the temple away, he quoted the prophet Isaiah from the 56th chapter saying, 'Is it not written, for my house shall be called of all nations a house of prayer? But you have made it a den of thieves.' That verse in the Gospel of Mark," said Strong, "is often used out of context, as though our Lord said, 'My house shall be made a house of prayer *for all people*.' That is bad interpretation. What our Lord said was, 'My house shall be for all people a *house of prayer*.' His emphasis was on the sacredness of the precincts of worship, that the temple 'is a place for prayer and not for money-making.'" Strong believed this passage revealed that sincerity of approach was the issue at question, "whether it is the temple in Jerusalem or a church sanctuary in Montgomery." Thus, it was proper, based on this text, to say to the African American visitors, "You are not welcome."

The Synod of Alabama took note of the congregation's action and reprimanded Trinity Church for turning away the African American visitors. The Montgomery church, however, maintained its segregation policy and did not suffer a division. In 1973, citing liberalism in the PCUS, it realigned to the newly-formed PCA.[884]

(January 27, 1965); "Door Continues to be Closed in Memphis," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (February 1, 1965): 10; Felix B. Gear, "The 1965 General Assembly," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (February 8, 1965); Joel L. Alvis Jr., *Religion and Race*, 101-03; Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 282; David Waters, "Churches Repent for Blocking their Doors," *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (March 26, 2014): L1.

883 See Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 228.

884 Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 47, 49-51.

Mississippi Presbyterian Layman's Association Organized

Almost ten years after the effort to mobilize Mississippi's segregationist Methodist laymen and in the aftermath of the Jackson church visit desegregation campaign, a call went forth to rally Mississippi's conservative Presbyterian men. According to papers in the archives of *The Presbyterian Journal* at the PCA Historical Society, Grady Johnson and others incorporated the organization in June 1964. On September 7, 1964, *The Presbyterian Outlook* published a letter it said had been sent to certain Presbyterian laymen in Mississippi:

Dear Fellow Presbyterian:

> This message comes to you from a group of Presbyterian laymen who are so concerned about conditions existing in our church that we have formed this organization. . . . We believe the Church is drifting, or being led, away from the plain teaching of the Bible and from our standards. Conditions in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., at this time appear extremely critical. Since the last General Assembly, we have heard many Presbyterians talking about their local church 'pulling out' of the denomination. The feeling of these people is that the General Assembly has taken positions that Christians cannot support.
>
> The basis of this organization is the firm conviction that Presbyterian laymen love their Lord and have zeal for the gospel. We are also convinced that whenever the issues are clear, Presbyterian laymen will hold firmly to the teaching of the Bible and to the standards of our Church. Our effort will be in future communications, *to make the issues clear.* Since our Church is governed by the votes of the members of the various church courts, our future communications will be sent to all elders (voters) as well as to all those who join this effort.

The apparently anonymous letter concluded, "We are convinced that it is now time for laymen to act."[885]

Sean Michael Lucas has written that, "Their conservatism also had a racial component: they stood against the National Council of Churches, especially because of that organization's involve-ment in the Delta Ministry and its larger goal of the civil rights law." *Presbyterian Journal* editor L. Nelson Bell was concerned and confided to Memphis conservative leader Horace Hull and Kenneth Keyes, head of the Concerned Presbyterians organization, that the Jackson laymen would turn their work into "a race protest," and that they were "willing (some of them anxious) to split the Church."[886]

The attempt to organize the conservative Mississippi Presbyterians doubtless illustrated the growing sense of frustration and isolation the segregationist community was experiencing, as well as the fact that desegregation of Jackson public schools was set to occur about the same time as plans for a Mississippi Presbyterian laymen's association were formulated. Not least of conservative Presbyterian concerns was the General Assembly's action to send down for the presbyteries' consideration the amendment to *The Book of Church Order* forbidding segregation in church seating. The effort (which, so far as is known, had no ties to the UPUSA's Presbyterian Lay Committee, then a Northern Presbyterian organization) did not achieve the influence among Presbyterians that the Mississippi Methodist organization did.

The move to organize Mississippi laymen for segregationist purposes bore resemblance to a 1959 effort by Presbyterians in Selma, Alabama, who opposed Ernest Trice Thompson's election as moderator of the General Assembly. As with the letter calling the Mississippi layman to organize, the Alabama conservatives also operated anonymously.[887]

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[885] "Dissidents Organize in Mississippi," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (September 7, 1964): 4; "Lay Group Devises Test for 'Liberals,'" *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (June 7, 1965): 8-9.

[886] See Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 250-51.

[887] Newsletters from this organization are archived at the PCA Historical Center in St. Louis. "Southern Presbyterian Group Says 'Liberal' Ministers Ruining Church," *Mobile Register* (October 20, 1959); see Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 249-50.

Continued Discord Among Mississippi Presbyterians

As Dupont observed, "Discord between fundamentalists and moderates had dogged the church for decades, but in 1964 Mississippi Presbyterians plotted their trajectory in radical defiance of denominational initiatives." That year, the PCUS responded to rising racial turmoil with a sweeping statement on African American equality. The General Assembly authorized use of denominational funds to support ministers who wished to participate in demonstrations, marches, or other civil rights initiatives. The Assembly also reiterated its longstanding condemnation of segregation and insisted that all churches under its care adopt non-segregated worship policies. It also ordered the dissolution of its remaining segregated presbyteries and the reception of the African American ministers and congregations into the former all-white presbyteries. The move affected 43 con-gregations, representing 2,500 of the nearly 1,000,000 members in the PCUS. Several of these small congregations were in or near Jackson. According to *The Jackson Daily News*, Jackson pastors B. I. Anderson and John Reed Miller argued against these initiatives because in their view, "The heart of the gospel is not the treatment of others, but . . . "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'"[888]

Some Mississippi Congregations Defy PCUS, Continue Segregation Policies

After the adoption of the 1964 open-seating amendment, several Mississippi Presbyterian con-gregations persevered in excluding worshipers on the basis of color. The session of Jackson's Alta Woods Presbyterian Church, where the Rev. B. I. Anderson was pastor, rejected the denomination's open-worship statement, declaring its intent, "to continue the policy of not allowing all races, creeds, and colors entrance to the worship services of this church."[889]

On June 7, 1964, the session of the First Church in Natchez met to discuss "pray-ins" [in Jackson] and actions of the General Assembly at Montreat." In particular, the elders discussed the proposed amendment to forbid discrimination on the basis of race or color in welcoming worshipers and voted to continue, "the present policy of seating colored worshipers in the galleries"—a policy the elders stated had been initiated when the galleries were added to the church in 1838. The church also extended the time allotted for building a new church for African American Presbyterians in Natchez. (Property had been purchased in 1953.) No church was ever erected. The congregation did contribute $240 later that summer to help rebuild two African American churches burned by racists in Adams County.[890]

At its June 1965 meeting, in defiance of the Assembly's order, the Synod of Mississippi advised the Assembly that it could not "in good conscience . . . place the stamp of its approval upon the recommendation that sessions of constituent churches of this Synod admit persons to membership without reference to race."[891]

The defiance continued for some time, occasioning the notice and admonition of the General Assembly. At a meeting of St. Andrew Presbytery in the summer of 1966, the Rev. Emett H. Barfield and others protested the session's policy of excluding African American worshipers from his congregation, the First Presbyterian Church of Grenada, and on July 12, 1966, the presbytery received (and tabled) the following resolution:

> WHEREAS, it has been brought to our attention, by both the national press and individual members of this Presbytery, that the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Grenada, has excluded certain persons from participation in public worship in the Lord's house on the grounds of race, color or class;

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888 Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 214-15; "Presbyterian Mixing Stand Draws Protest," *Jackson Daily News* (April 28, 1964): 15. In 1975, the widely regarded London pastor and preacher John R. W. Stott penned a volume, *Christian Mission in the Modern* World, to remind evangelicals that biblical Christianity included both evangelism and social justice.

889 Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 215.

890 Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez*, 130.

891 Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 6, 1965): 21.

WHEREAS, in this action, which occurred on Sunday, July 10, 1966, our Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was violated;

WHEREAS, our Standards are very clear in this matter; The *Confession of Faith* says: 'Saints by their profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus' (Chapter XXVIII, section ii); *The Book of Church Order* further says: 'No one shall be excluded from participation in public worship in the Lord's house on the grounds of race, color, or class.' (paragraph 201-5).

THEREFORE, be it resolved:

1) That the Presbytery of St. Andrew reaffirm its loyalty to the Word of God and the Presbyterian Church in the United States;
2) That the Session of the First Presbyterian Church in Grenada be asked to reconsider its action in order that it may be brought in accord with the standards of our Church; and
3) That such action be reported to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery within fourteen (14) days.

Several commissioners, including the Revs. T. Robert Fulton of the First Church in Greenville; C. Denton O'Dell, presbytery's minister of Christian Education; Frank L. Seaman of Sardis, Thomas D. Walker of Aberdeen, and Elder Russell Bryson of Tupelo, complained to the synod for the reason, "That Presbytery failed to fulfill its responsibility 'to see that the lawful injunctions of the higher courts are obeyed.'"[892]

A similar situation had arisen at Montgomery, Alabama's influential Trinity Presbyterian Church where a racially mixed group of Presbyterians desired to hear the Rev. Leighton Ford preach. Ford was a PCUS minister and the brother-in-law of Billy Graham. He was a member of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which eschewed segregated meetings. The integrated group was refused admission, and complaints were filed against this action in both the Presbytery of East Alabama and the Synod of Alabama. The synod ruled that the denial was not in accord with denominational practice but held the integrated group responsible "for precipitating a confrontation."[893] The Rev. Ben Lacy Rose wrote in his popular question-and-answer column in *The Presbyterian Survey* that even before the constitutional changes of 1964, *The Book of Church Order* did not confer the power to deny persons attendance at worship to officers or members of a congregation. "Moreover, there was ample scriptural justification to open the doors and welcome all 'who labor and are heavy laden.'"[894]

The issue caused strife within families. Hodding Carter Jr., crusading editor of Greenville's *Delta Democrat-Times*, remembered that when Roy Campbell Jr., an elder in that city's First Presbyterian Church, told his mother that he thought African Americans ought to be seated, the older woman was outraged. "Mother, what do you think Jesus would do if he were standing at the front door of First Presbyterian Church?"[895] he asked. "I know exactly what He would do," she huffed. "And he would be wrong." In the same period, Carter and a like-minded associate were denied reelection to the vestry of Greenville's St. James Episcopal Church.[896]

[892] "Congregations Barring Negroes Condemned by Assembly," *Religious News Service* (April 27, 1966); Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 96-99; Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (July 12, 1966): 24.

[893] Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 98.

[894] *Presbyterian Survey* 54 (January 1965): 18.

[895] This account was told directly to the author by Mrs. Campbell's son Roy Campbrll Jr.

[896] Ann Waldron, *Hodding Carter: The Reconstruction of a Racist* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin, 1993): 248.

Questioning or Instructing General Assembly Commissioners Debated

Following the 1964 General Assembly, there were increasing calls for questioning potential General Assembly commissioners as to their views, or for instructing them as to how they should vote. Such calls cast light on the differences between the ascending bodies of Presbyterian governance as church courts from that of other bodies that were purely legislative or designed to reflect popular opinion. Conservative Presbyterian laymen flocked to the watchdog group named Concerned Presbyterians. A Jackson spokesman said the organization hoped "to rid our church of liberalism and get it back to the teachings of the Scriptures." In particular, the organization condemned the "invasion" of Mississippi for civil rights work.[897]

The Concerned Presbyterians and other similar organizations urged conservatives to rally lay-men against ministers and urged that commissioners to meetings of the church courts, in line with democratic ideals of government, be questioned and instructed as to their views and votes. Discussions ensued as to whether it was appropriate in Presbyterian polity to question potential commissioners to presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly or instruct them as to how to vote. It was suggested that multiple nominees be put forward and the members of the body allowed to choose among them. Others argued that it was surely fair to take straw polls of electing bodies, that commissioners to a higher court might know the prevailing sentiments.

The Rev. Horace L. Villee, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, served as a contact man for Presbyterian Churchmen United, a similar conservative organization dedicated to fighting the proliferation of theological liberalism. Villee strenuously objected to PCUS initiatives on racial justice because they "destroy[ed] the segregation pattern that has worked so excellently in promoting racial harmony and good will." The organization was led by the Rev. Donald B. Patterson, then pastor of McIlwain Memorial Presbyterian Church in Pensacola, later the pastor of the First Church in Jackson.[898]

Dwyn Milton Mounger and Inter-Racial Committee of Concern Seek to Rebuild Burned Churches

In the summer of 1964, a great many African American churches across Mississippi were burned in the belief that they were providing meeting places to organize voter registration drives led by the Council of Federated Organizations. During COFO's "Freedom Summer," civil rights workers suffered 80 beatings, 35 shootings, 30 house bombings, and six murders. In October 1964—jarred by the burning of 33 African American churches (by some accounts, the number was 41) in the state since June of 1963—ostensibly because they had hosted civil rights meetings—prominent church and synagogue leaders, including the Methodist, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic bishops, organized a Committee of Concern to solicit $300,000 to rebuild the churches. Fifteen white and African American ministers representing all major denominations except the Southern Baptists began meeting periodically in the Jackson office of Catholic Bishop Richard O. Gerow. After a time, the Southern Baptists made a similar but separate effort, justifying their action on the ground that most of the churches that had been burned were Baptist, albeit of a different Baptist denomination. White Mississippi Baptists raised $126,766 to help rebuild the burned-out churches.[899] The churches were constructed of fireproof brick.

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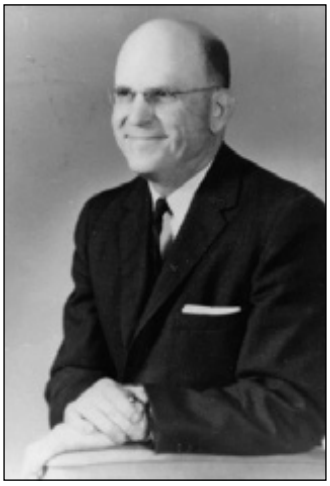
[897] See Peter R. Branton, "The Truth about the National Council of Churches," *Concerned Presbyterian* (March 1965): 3-6, cited in Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 254.

[898] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 218; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 267.

[899] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 227; Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981): 169-77; Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Penguin Group, 2010); "Beauty for Ashes," pamphlet, Mississippi Baptist Convention Committee of Concern. Mississippi Council on Human Relations Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Mark Newman, "The Mississippi Baptist Convention and Desegregation, 1945-1980," *Journal of Mississippi History* 59 (Spring 1997): 14-15; Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 257-58.

The Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger, who had been executive secretary for Church Extension for Central Mississippi Presbytery since 1954, was the natural choice to head the Presbyterian effort to assist with the rebuilding of buildings that housed predominantly African American congregations burned in Neshoba County, Hattiesburg, Meridian, and other places during the summer of 1964. State Treasurer and elder William Winter joined Mounger as a Presbyterian member of the committee.[900] Mounger had overseen the organization and erection of five new Presbyterian churches in the presbytery. Now, in the summer of 1964, a new challenge awaited. By his account,

> One day I was surprised by a call from Dr. J. Moody McDill, who was the pastor of the Fondren Presbyterian Church. 'Hello, Dwyn, this is Moody. Dwyn, you know of course about the riots, and the night rides and killings and burning of the black churches, and about Meredith and what happened at the University of Mississippi and in Montgomery and Birmingham and about Philadelphia, Mississippi and the three men lynched there. . . . You know something should be done toward trying to put a stop to all this. A few leaders of the churches, Catholic Bishops Richard Oliver Gerow and Joseph B. Brunini, Episcopal Bishop John M. Allin, and Rabbi Nussbaum, and leaders of other religious groups white and black are trying to form a group to take a stand to counteract some of this and to raise funds to rebuild the black churches burned down in the night. Dwyn, will you represent our presbytery on this Committee of Concern?'



—photo courtesy of Dwyn Mecklin Mounger.

The Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger was Executive Secretary for Church Extension in Central Mississippi Presbytery, 1954-68.

Although President Kennedy had recently suggested that the best way forward in places of racial tension was the formation of interracial committees, the idea of any sort of biracial council was anathema to Southern Citizens' Council leaders. The Rev. J. Phillips Noble, a native of Learned, Mississippi, who had been licensed by the Central Mississippi Presbytery in 1945, and had served on the Stillman College board and was then pastor of the First Church of Anniston, Alabama. He wrote of his concerns when asked to chair a Human Relations Council in that city, which had seen an upsurge of Ku Klux Klan violence: "There was a pause before I said anything. It raced through my mind how greatly opposed the white South was to biracial committees. City after city had refused to set up such a committee. The mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, 25 miles from my home place of Learned, had sworn he would never appoint a biracial committee . . . Hardcore segregationists usually proclaimed that biracial

[900] Charles C. Bolton, "William F. Winter and the Politics of Racial Moderation in Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 70 (Winter 2008): 378-80.

committees were just the first step to 'giving in.'" With the backing of his elders, Noble served, and much good was accomplished amid threats to his home, church, and family.[901]

Back in Jackson, Mounger told McDill that he recognized there was no chance that the presbytery, as it was then constituted, would officially elect him to such a committee and that there would be many, "who would not welcome the idea of my serving on this committee even though my special work and responsibility is the building of churches." Still, Mounger saw the desperate need, even if it was controversial. He told McDill, "I cannot in good conscience say no."

The Committee of Concern, with representatives from about 15 religious groups, raised about $300,000 to reconstruct ten African American houses of worship. To Mounger, this "was a signal to the racial extremists that their acts of terror and burning of crosses and buildings, their bombs and torches did not, as they had hoped, have the stamp of approval of a large segment of the white people of Mississippi."

But one morning, at home, the doorbell rang. When he opened it, standing in the doorway was a man dressed in a conservative black suit. He introduced himself as being with the FBI, whose work in the state capital was to try to deal with racist terrorism. When invited in, he began, "You are a member of the Committee of Concern with the task of rebuilding the Black churches destroyed by arson, aren't you? You know that a Unitarian minister has been shot, Rabbi Nussbaum's home near here has been demolished, and the new Jewish temple has been bombed and severely damaged?"

"Yes, Rabbi Nussbaum and I are friends. We served as chaplains in World War II and are now active together in the U. S. Army Chaplain's Reserve Training program."

"Yes, I understand. They have had other members of the Committee of Concern on their hit list in Jackson. We in the FBI here think you may be next on the list for the night riders. Would you like for us to watch your house at night?"

Mounger was a bit shocked on learning this because he did not realize that what he was doing so innocently and as a minister—that is, building churches—could bring danger to his own life and that of his family. Neighbors several houses away in Jackson's Belhaven neighborhood, who had allowed civil rights workers to sleep in their homes, had been attacked by Klansmen. Mounger declined the FBI protection and wondered how racial fanatics terrorizing those whom they called liberals and Communists could imagine such persons were a threat to them "so that they, in their cowardice and fear struck out at night at peaceful sleeping families." Mounger wrote that, "Though I had never had a gun of any sort in my life, I went to a pawn shop and bought a 410-gauge multiple firing shotgun and shells and asked a neighbor to give me instructions in using and placed it loaded and ready under my bed. Whether or not I would have used it in self-defense I do not know."[902]

Betty Anne Mounger Hays recalled the tension of those days:

> I was living on Saint Mary in the Belhaven area, and my father was living a block and a half away, my father and mother, on Piedmont Street, 1821 Piedmont Street.
>
> An FBI member came to my father's house, and he said, 'We understand that you are next on the bombing list from the Ku Klux Klan.' At that time [there had been] several bombings and I had personally felt two of them.
>
> We were on Saint Mary and the Katiskeys [sp.?] were on the other end, and they had entertained—let Freedom Riders spend the night at their house. And that blast nearly, it shook our whole house, it was really scary. And the FBI man said, 'Would you like for us to keep a watch on your house? We'd be glad to, to watch out for you and ride around a lot.'
>
> My father said, 'I don't think that's necessary.' But then he and mother—mother was very scared, and daddy was scared enough to go to a pawn shop and buy a four-ten shotgun and the shells, and load it

[901] J. Phillips Noble, *Beyond the Burning Bus: The Civil Rights Revolution in a Southern Town* (Montgomery, Alabama: New South Books, 2003): 75-150.

[902] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 22-24; Statement before the Presbytery of Mississippi (April 22, 1994): 2.

and keep it loaded under his bed because his bed was—where he slept—was only about a foot from the wall—my folk's bedroom was on the front of the house.

One night he heard a thud against the side of the house, and he grabbed the shotgun and went outside. And there was a poor little scared paper boy out there because instead of hitting the front porch as the paper boy usually did, he had thrown it and missed and hit the side of the wall by my daddy's bed. And he looked up after he went into the bushes to get the paper and then place it on the front steps, and there my daddy was standing over him with a shotgun.[903]

Mounger wrote that, "One day in a meeting of the presbytery, I arose and spoke to the body to tell them about the Committee of Concern and to appeal to them for contributions in rebuilding African American churches, mostly of the Baptist denomination which had been burned in the racial turmoil. The only response was that the stated clerk immediately moved for adjournment and after a quick second to the motion, it was adopted, and the presbytery adjourned. "Some of these 'conservative' pastors not long afterwards began to hint to me that perhaps I should move along. Others complained that not enough new churches were being organized and built. I soon received and accepted a call to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis."[904]

Church Burnings Prompt Former Missionary's Speech in South Mississippi Presbytery

In the summer of 1964, as church buildings belonging to African American congregations were being burned or bombed, it was clear that the Ku Klux Klan had revived. The Synod of Mississippi adopted resolutions deploring the violence. In the face of such developments, the Rev. Harry M. Punt—a native of the Netherlands, and former missionary in the Congo, who served as pastor of the Sharon and Magee Churches in South Mississippi Presbytery and chaired the presbytery's Committee on Foreign Missions (1961-1967)—addressed the presbytery in the autumn of 1964 about such matters. He was rigorously conservative in theology but conscious of the way Southern racism was perceived in the wider world, and especially on the mission field.

By the Rev. James O. Chatham's recollection,

It was a cool fall day. I had been in Mississippi only a few weeks and was still very new to how things happened there. South Mississippi Presbytery, which consisted of commissioners from every Presbyterian church in the southern third of the state, was meeting in Hattiesburg. With the civil rights movement in full motion around us, someone had presented a resolution proposing that we declare publicly that our churches were open to all people regardless of race or color, that we did not intend to discriminate against anyone. Some commissioners would greatly favor this resolution; others would strongly oppose it. The debate was certain to occupy at least two hours.

Those who offered the resolution—most of them young people like me—spoke in support. 'God wills unity, not division,' said one. 'God breaks down dividing walls of hostility,' said another, referring to the letter to the Ephesians. 'God builds bridges, not chasms.' 'God alone is to decide who enters the doors of a church, not us.'

Some eloquent statements were made. I realized that the progressives had had a fair bit of practice by now and were beginning to be pretty good.

There were also the negatives, the full range.

'Why would God have created different nations if God wanted them all mixed together? This would go against the natural order of the universe.'

[903] *Speak Now: Memories of the Civil Rights Era* / *Memories of Betty Anne Mounger Hays*, Wednesday, October 12, 2011, oral history interview moderated by Amanda Lyons. Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[904] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 25.

'You can't legislate morality. New laws don't create new hearts. God creates new hearts. Our job is to lead people to God, not to pass laws. If we start legislating, we are putting ourselves in the place of God. . . .

'God told Adam and Eve to fill the earth and subdue it, not to integrate it.'

'We know the Mississippi Negroes. They wouldn't be happy in our churches. They need their own churches, where they can worship in their way. . . .

'The only Negroes who are going to come to our churches are the rabble-rousers, the ones demonstrating. They don't want to worship; they just want to disturb everyone else. It would upset the sincere devotion of true Christian people if we let them in.'

'If God wanted Negroes and whites to intermingle, why did God create redbirds and bluebirds? Watch the bird feeder outside your window some morning. Even those little creatures know better than to integrate. We should know better, too.'

'It all started in Moscow! The communists are set on wrecking our southern way of life! Lenin said it first, then Stalin: 'All we got to do is attack their moral character, and the best way to do that is to mix them all together. . . .

After the debate had gone on for a while, a frail, gray man rose to his feet on the other side of the room. Who is that?' I asked the friend beside me.

'The Reverend Mr. Matthew Bunt,' he replied. . . . [Chatham, who was pastor at Fayette and Union Church, mistakenly recalled Punt's name as Bunt.] We both sat fearing the worst. We shouldn't have.

'If we tell Negro people they are not welcome in our worship,' this little man roared, 'then my decades of missionary labor in West Africa have been a sham! If we tell them that we want them to be Christians, but not in our congregations, then I have been preaching a divided Christ. For years I have labored among Negroes. They are as good as I am, as bad as I am. God loves them the same way God loves me. In Africa I have made dear friends, people I will cherish as long as I live.

'A Negro man risked his life for me. I was in danger of being attacked by a snake. That snake could have killed me. My Negro friend, with enormous courage, broke the snake's back. He could have been seriously injured himself. I owe my life to that man. 'The last thing I said to him before I left Africa was, 'Come to see me in Mississippi.' If he comes, can I not bring him to my church? Can I not offer to him the same hand of Christian fellowship he offered me?'

The elders who were attending the meeting from Mr. [P]unt's congregation sat in frozen silence. They loved the old man, respected him, would not cross him, but they most certainly did not agree with what he was saying now, and they did not want to be publicly associated with his position. No one openly dissented, but neither did they smile nor nod. Mr. [P]unt was making this speech alone.

'As you decide how you will vote here today,' Mr. [P]unt continued, 'I ask you to think of the message you will send to the world. The world is not just the space between Alabama and Louisiana, not just these Mississippi fields. The world has as many dark-skinned Christians as light-skinned Christians. Do we really want to draw a dividing line through the middle here today? Do we really wish to proclaim that God has called two churches, one for us and the other for everyone else?. . . . 'We are part of a bigger humanity, part of God's whole creation. I ask you not to vote today to wall yourself off, not to act as if Mississippi needs to be protected from the rest of the world. I ask you to join arms with your faithful brothers and sisters everywhere in proclaiming Jesus Christ. That is the only way our message will preach God's word!'

Reverberating through the assembly, Mr. [P]unt's final words evoked thunderous silence. Not a sound! Dead still. No one dared even a murmur.

Mr. [P]unt sat down. His elders looked to the side as if nothing at all had happened. The debate was over. Even the moderator did not move swiftly to continue the meeting.

The vote went two to one against the motion, in favor of keeping our churches segre-gated. Mr. [P]unt had lost. His persuasion had not been sufficient. The wall of prejudice remained. There was, however, no

rejoicing and no self-congratulating among the victors, as there often was. The great beast had sustained a powerful blow. Mr. [P]unt had not really lost at all.[905]

Mississippi's Freedom Summer

In the summer of 1963, civil rights momentum had shifted from registering voters to a drive to send an integrated delegation to the Democratic National Convention to be held in Atlantic City that August. The effort continued the next year. That year, 1964, was called Mississippi's Freedom Summer. In March 1964, an official of the National Council of Churches, one of the sponsors of the Mississippi Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) project, predicted there would be "clashes" between African Americans and whites as the program got under way. Student workers and civil rights activists conducted schools for Black voter registration and tried with peaceful means to desegregate public facilities that had been previously white-only. Segregationists retaliated where they could. Swimming pools constructed and maintained by municipalities all over the state for whites only were shut down to avoid integration. Jackson's Mayor Thompson closed all the city's pools that summer. The Jackson pools were not reopened for 11 years. In some of the smaller towns, pools were never reopened.[906]

The legislature passed new laws to discourage demonstrators, making it easier for police to arrest picketers, imposing strict curfews, and legalizing restraint of movement by individuals under certain conditions. To curb business boycotts, it was made unlawful "to print or circulate any matter for the purpose of impairing, interfering with, or preventing another person from exercising a lawful trade or calling. State officials hired more police officers and bought heavy weaponry, including a $13,000 armored riot-control vehicle, similar in design to armored cars used by banks to transport money. The car had capacity for 10 men with 14 vents from which to fire guns or tear gas. It was nicknamed 'Thompson's Tank,' in wry reference to Jackson's mayor. Supplementing the city's paddy wagons was a fleet of city trucks fitted with wire cages for prisoners. Two buildings at the state fairgrounds were renovated to hold 5,000 arrested demonstrators."[907]

Landmark Civil Rights Legislation Passed by Congress

Following the assassination of President Kennedy, the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, addressed Congress five days later, urging the earliest possible passage of a civil rights bill, "as a fitting memorial to our late president." At the time of Kennedy's death, 16,000 American soldiers were stationed in Vietnam. As in World War II and Korea, African Americans, as well as whites, were being drafted for military service.

Johnson's support for civil rights was a watershed. A Texan, he had broken with other Democrats from the South to support racial and economic justice for African Americans. Liberal Presbyterians took note and hailed the President's action. Conservatives dug in for battle. Johnson's commitment was matched by legislative skill, and he and progressives in the Congress were eventually successful in spite of a 60-day Southern filibuster.[908]

Segregationists, who dominated the Mississippi legislature, in session early in 1964, appropriated $50,000 to help cover the cost of advertising throughout the nation to influence members of Congress who were not yet committed to support the civil rights bill. But on April 14, 1964, Federal Judge Sidney Mize struck down barriers to the integration of Jackson's airport, bus, and railroad station waiting rooms.

[905] Chatham, *Sundays Down South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999): 45-50.
[906] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 236, 251.
[907] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 250-54.
[908] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 242-433.

Violence Mars Mississippi's Summer of 1963

As historian Chris Myers Ash noted, "The bloody clash in Oxford may have been a defeat for the segregationists, but it did not curtail white violence in the state. Indeed, violence against civil rights workers surged in 1963." That autumn, movement leaders in Mississippi sought to attract national attention to African Americans' lack of voting rights. The Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee and other civil rights groups joined forces through the Council of Federated Organizations to hold a "Freedom Vote" to coincide with the state's gubernatorial election in November 1963, an election in which few Blacks could vote. Segregationists worried in the summer of 1964 as momentum in the state turned from the NAACP toward SNCC, and politicians sought to highlight the new direction as a turn toward Communism. Such charges doubtless had the effect of quieting ministers who might otherwise have advocated racial justice.[909]

As the civil rights bill was being debated, the rhetoric of Southern resistance turned into violence. The first casualties came in on June 21, when three civil rights workers—Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Cheney—vanished after investigating a church bombing near Meridian. Senator James O. Eastland initially called the disappearance "a publicity stunt." Forty-four days later, the men's bodies were found buried in an earthen dam near Philadelphia. Schwerner had been castrated before he was killed. There was evidence that Goodman had been buried alive after being shot. The Civil Rights Act was passed on July 2 and signed into law by President Johnson a few hours later. The entire Mississippi Congressional delegation had voted against the Civil Rights Act.

Threats and intimidation against moderate ministers continued. Conservative sessions con-tinued to make their views known. The elders of the First Church in Meridian adopted a resolution opposing racial integration at Southwestern at Memphis. Still, as more activists poured into Mississippi in preparation for civil rights efforts in the summer of 1964, the headlines turned from news of petitions to reports of violence. As the Rev. Ed King later wrote, "It was good that the effort had been made," to confront white Christians with the moral issues surrounding church segregation, but now, "we waited for the burning crosses and bombs we knew would come." In the meantime, by a narrow vote, the Mississippi Methodist Conference discontinued its connection with King.[910]

In June 1964, the Rev. Moody McDill told newly arrived Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Henry M. McKay, that he had found a shoebox full of explosives in his mailbox.[911] That month's events took a devastating turn when the three civil rights volunteers were abducted near Philadelphia, Mississippi, then shot at close range and killed by members of the local Ku Klux Klan, with collusion from the Neshoba County Sheriff's Office and the Philadelphia Police Department.

In early 1964, Rita and Michael Schwerner, of New York City, had spent time in Jackson with Ed King and the Tougaloo activists. They discussed the efforts by King and others to visit white Jackson churches and seek dialogue with the white community through their pastors. The Schwerners went to work in Meridian. One of their first efforts was to visit local clergy and white-controlled churches. In February, they failed in an attempt to visit a white church, bringing with them an African American friend. After successfully visiting a white church in March (at the invitation of the minister), the Schwerners became the target of threats. *The Meridian Star* denounced church integration, and a few days later, police detained Michael Schwerner. He had gone to Philadelphia to investigate the burning of an African American church. As of that day, Schwerner's sole civil rights-related

[909] Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper*, 193, 209.

[910] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 18, 1963): 129; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 459.

[911] Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 420.

activity had been attempts to visit white-controlled churches in Meridian, along with African American persons who also wished to worship.[912]

Once the civil rights bill was signed into law, Jackson Mayor Thompson, who had successfully defied earlier attempts at integration with a no-retreat, no-surrender posture against the demands of civil rights workers and African American leaders, declared that city officials had no choice but to obey the law, even though he maintained that it was unconstitutional. Taking a different pose than Arkansas governor Orville Faubus, he said that the city schools could not be closed in the face of court-ordered desegregation, "because the Federal government would step in and run them and levy taxes to support them."[913]

Resistance continued. Segregationists argued that their freedom was at stake in their resistance to civil rights: the freedom of businessmen to determine whom they would serve on the premises they owned, the freedom of school boards to determine which students should attend, the freedom of states to determine their own marriage laws and other regulations governing the association of people, and the freedom of congregations to determine who should worship.

In the summer, the Civil Rights Act was signed, African American leaders and their supporters challenged the seating of the regular delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. A compromise was imposed, and two of the Freedom Democrats, as the African American delegates and their white supporters were called, were seated. The convention imposed a loyalty oath—to support the party platform and its nominees. The oath was required of the regular Mississippi delegates. Only three took the oath; the rest left the convention.

In the autumn of 1964, the state gave its electoral votes to a Republican nominee for President, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, who had voted against Civil Rights Act of 1964. Goldwater's vote against the Voting Rights Act did nothing to diminish his standing in segregationist Mis-sissippi circles. The intensely conservative syndicated columnist Florence Sillers Ogden, a native of Rosedale, endorsed Goldwater and called for all "loyal white Mississippians" to "forever break with the National Democratic Party."[914]

Many of the state's Democratic politicians supported Goldwater, including former Governors Hugh White and Ross Barnett. The state's popular votes—with few African Americans then registered—were 356,000 for Goldwater to only 52,600 for Johnson. For the nation at large, it was a landslide victory for Johnson. Most of white Mississippi was still at odds with the rest of the country. In early 1965, Senator Eastland took the floor of the Senate to denounce "Communist support and participation in the so-called Freedom Democratic Party."[915]

The charges had some truth. Although the NAACP was determinedly anti-Communist, other civil rights organizations were less ideologically rigid. They accepted help from whatever quarter it was offered. For example, at a time when most Americans were unwilling to ally with individuals or organizations that included Communists, SNCC and other civil rights leaders chose not to exclude them for both philosophical and practical reasons.[916]

Mayor Buddy McLean Worked for Change in Columbia

Presbyterian lay leaders in some communities were alert to the possibilities of positive change. One was Earl D. "Buddy" McLean, mayor of Columbia, and a deacon in the town's Presbyterian Church. In the summer of 1964, the Rev. William G. McAtee, son of longtime Brookhaven pastor William H. McAtee, a graduate of Southwestern and Louisville Seminary, had recently assumed the pastorate of the church at Columbia after completing a five-year

[912] Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York: Macmillan, 1988): 11, 262-68; Carol V. R. George. One Mississippi, Two Mississippi: Methodists, Murder & the Struggle for Racial Justice in Neshoba County**.** New York: Oxford University Press, 2015; Lyon, "Lifting the Color Bar," 459-60.

[913] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 243, 245, 247-48.

[914] James C. Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II*, 121; Crespino, 103.

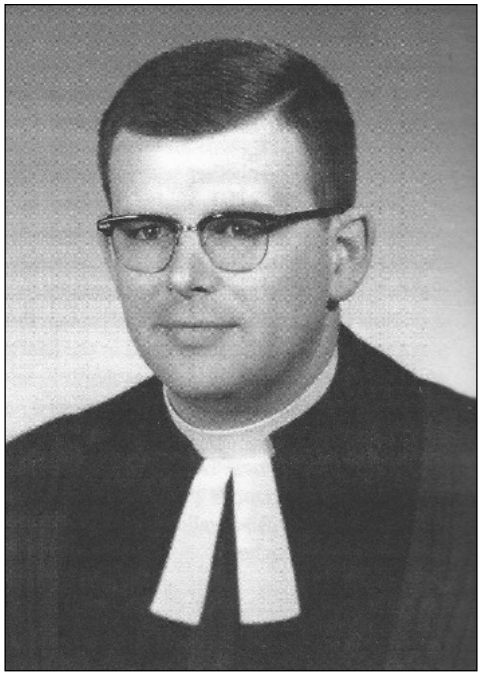
[915] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 263-70.

[916] See Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995): 105-106.

ministry at the Amory Presbyterian Church in St. Andrew Presbytery. Shortly after McAtee family's arrival in Columbia, word came of the disappearance and brutal murder of Andrew Goodman, James Cheney, and Michael Schwerner. Mayor McLean was determined that his community would not be a scene of violence and obstinate defiance of the law. He enlisted McAtee's help. McAtee joined a group of local ministers (two white and four African American) in assisting McLean, in an effort to build community bridges and navigate the roiling social and political waters. The efforts continued over many months. As a result of such careful work—work that entailed threats and opposition—Columbia was spared the unrest and community disruption that affected nearby cities such as Hattiesburg, Laurel, and McComb.[917] Yet, there was opposition.

In a sermon, July 18, 1965, McAtee said that,

> Too often we shut our eye to the poor and the effects of poverty, then condemn the poor for being undeserving: we claim the business of the church is saving souls and not social reform; we do not recognize that charity without love destroys the giver and the receiver; we denounce every effort to meet the needs of the poor. . . . It would be staggering to describe the impact on this community if the church out of Christian conviction, together and individually, would take the lead in . . . doing things we have never done before. . . . But this just won't happen, it must be worked for.[918]



—photo courtesy the Rev. William G. McLean.

As pastor at Columbia, the Rev. William G. McAtee assisted Mayor E. D. "Buddy" McLean, a deacon in the Columbia Church, who led a heroic racial reconciliation effort, avoiding violence in that community. McAtee later published an account of the experience, entitled Transformed: A White Mississippi Pastor's Journey into Civil Rights and Beyond (2011).

[917] Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); McAtee, *Transformed: A White Mississippi Pastor's Journey into Civil Rights and Beyond*.

[918] Lechtreck, *Southern White Minsters and the Civil Rights Movement*, 240-44.

"God Plays No Favorites:" The Rev. Robert Lawrence's Sermon for Race Relations Sunday

Acts 10:1-35

Some Mississippi Presbyterian ministers tried to address the unfolding racial situation. Race Relations Sunday offered an opportunity. The Federal Council of Churches initiated Race Relations Sunday in 1922, to be observed each year on the second Sunday of February. Beginning in the 1950s, the National Council of Churches (successor to the Federal Council) began issuing pamphlets for Race Relations Sunday that promoted individual and political approaches to address racial problems in America. The Rev. Robert Lawrence, a native of Montgomery, Alabama and a graduate of Auburn University and Columbia Seminary, had come to Meridian's Trinity Church following their failed attempt to have the Rev. Mac Hart as their pastor. Several years later, he came as pastor to Covenant Presbyterian Church in Jackson. He preached this sermon, published in *The Presbyterian Outlook*, at Covenant Church, February 14, 1965:

> The most remarkable thing about the New Testament lesson today is not the fact that in the story an angel drops in on an astonished Roman centurion, or that Simon Peter had an unexpected vision while relaxing on a rooftop waiting for dinner to be served, or even that right in the middle of Peter's sermon in Cornelius' house the Holy Spirit suddenly descends and the whole congregation is converted. (Actually, we did not read that far in the story but it's there.) The most remarkable fact of all is the story itself, the story of a Roman centurion sending for a Jew to tell him about the gospel, and the Jew accepting the invitation, and the whole thing ending with the two men becoming brothers in Jesus Christ.
>
> Now, there is a miracle for you. You could expect that an angel might occasionally pop in on somebody, or that a man like Peter might have a vision some time or other, but that these two men should become brothers—this we most certainly would not expect.

This story marks the beginning of a whole new era in the life of the Christian Church. It is so important in Luke's eyes that he devotes an unexpected amount of space to it. In fact, he even goes to the trouble of reporting every detail twice: you have the narrative telling us about Cornelius' visit by the angel and later on Cornelius' retelling of it to Peter. And Peter recounts the whole affair once more in the 11th chapter of Acts as he explains his reasons for his actions. Obviously, the reason for this repetition is Luke's conviction that this is a matter of supreme importance for the Christian Church.

Main Characters

So, in order to get hold of this importance for ourselves let us look at the story a little more closely. It is easy for almost 2,000 years to blur our vision about some of it. And we might as well begin with the two principal characters.

First of all, there is Cornelius, a tough professional soldier who lived in Caesarea with his family. Since Caesarea was a garrison town, it isn't surprising that he was a centurion with the army corps stationed there. But Luke also mentions that he was a devout man who feared God. What exactly does this mean? Well, the phrase generally refers to a gentile who had accepted the truth of the Jewish faith and who had become some kind of a loose adherent to the synagogue, yet who did not go all the way and become a Jew—that is, receive circumcision. It isn't difficult to imagine why a man like Cornelius would not take that final step. After all, Cornelius had already made something of himself. He had worked his way up through the ranks to a position of respect and honor in the Roman army. You just couldn't get much more out of life than that! We would say, 'He had it made.' Now ask a man like that to become a Jew. To embrace that religion was one thing. Actually, to become a Jew—well, that was a horse of a different color. In the eyes of a Roman to BECOME a Jew was not a step up.

There was also Simon Peter, big, lovable, thoroughly Jewish. All his life he had been a faithful follower of the Law, and so far as our story this morning is concerned, this meant that Peter would have no dealings with anybody who wasn't also a Jew. The Jew did not worship with gentiles, eat with them, or associate with them. They were like dogs. God's chosen people were the Jews, oh yes, Simon was also a Christian, an apostle, no less. But he was still a Jew. So far as gentiles were concerned, he felt like a Jew about them. And it is also true that he had received the great commission along with the other disciples, but so far it had not occurred to Peter or any of the others exactly that preaching the gospel to every creature could [not] be done in the context of the prevailing Jewish outlook on every creature that was not Jewish too!

But one day Peter had a vision in which he saw a sheet full of animals which he had always scorned as unclean by the Law and heard a voice, the voice of God himself, telling him to eat. Strange Word of God, asking him to do what he had always been taught was against the Law of God. Yet when Simon protested, that same voice of God answered him, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call common.' This thrice repeated vision troubled Peter. It is always disturbing when the Word of God shatters in a moment some of our most cherished traditions. And at the very moment when Peter is wrestling with the meaning of all this, he is interrupted by a knock at the door.

He Obeyed

Well, you heard the story and know what happened. In obedience to the Word of God, Simon Peter, the Jew, puts aside his traditions and culture and goes to the home of a gentile, a conquering Roman soldier's home no less, and preaches before a gentile congregation! That knock on the door a Joppa wiped out the traditions and convictions of a lifetime with its demands. For the first time in history a non-Jew was welcomed into the Church of Christ. From that moment on, the Christian Church was forced out on a new and wider mission in history. From that instant, the Christian Church became a house of prayer for *all* nations, as Simon Peter and eventually the whole Church realized that God is no respecter of persons—or as Moffatt translates it, 'God has no favorites,' not even the Jews. The Church could not close its doors to anyone and be faithful to its calling. Neither could it make distinctions between men which God himself did not make. *And the miracle is that this really happened*. The ancient wall of partition, built by Jew and gentile—Cornelius had his prejudices, too—was destroyed.

For Today

This is quite a story, and it is literally frothy with implications. Yet on a Race Relations Sunday it is well-nigh impossible NOT to see that this Scripture is connected with the race crisis which confronts the Church in our own day. As the first century Church had to wrestle with the status of the gentile, so we wrestle with the issue of the status of the Negro in the Church in our day. I realize, of course, that this is a highly volatile issue. It was in Peter's day, too, as we will see in a moment. So, let me make some preliminary remarks right here.

When the apostle Paul was debating the issue of the status of gentiles in the Christian Church, at one place he uses his own Jewish heritage as a starting point. For what it may be worth, let me make a similar move. I am a Southerner of Southerners; born in the South, reared in the South by Southerners, educated in the South, lived in the South. With the exception of two or three vacations and World War II, I have not even been out of the South. The only people who can claim to have been here longer than I have are those who are older than I am! I've lived here all my life. What I am saying to you is that when I speak to you as a minister of the gospel concerning the race question, I am not an outside agitator coming down from Chicago.

I know what "the problem" is. This is *my* home, too. But I am a minister of the gospel, and if I refrained from telling you my convictions about any passage of Scripture it would mean either I lack confidence in the Word of God or confidence in you. The highest compliment I can pay to this congregation is to talk to you about a controversial issue, asking you to examine your own life with me in the light of God's Word. I believe that you would not want me to do otherwise.

An Act of Obedience

With that bit of maneuvering around, let us get back to the passage and try to hear what God is saying to us in it. Consider, for one thing, why Simon Peter went to the house of Cornelius. Essentially, it was an act of obedience. Perhaps you remember in the story that the very first word Simon addresses to the congregation is an apology for being there at all: 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or visit anyone of another nation. . . .' And while he goes on to say that since God himself directed him to do it and that he comes without objection, one gets the feeling from this somewhat apologetic opening that Peter was not particularly overjoyed to be there. At any rate, he took along six Jewish companions for company.

But this act of obedience on Peter's part underscores once more a fact which the Christian Church can hardly over-emphasize, namely, that the Church is not a democratic society. The Church has a Lord whom we are to obey. It has never been otherwise. At our last Wednesday evening study on the Exodus, we talked about the covenant which God established between himself and Israel, and the giving of the Ten Commandments as Israel's part in that covenantal relationship. The interesting point about it is that Israel had no voice in the composition of those commandments. That is to say, the Jews did not climb up on Sinai and work out a mutually agreeable contract. God's people did not have that kind of prerogative and they still don't. God said, 'This is my commandment.'

You see, we are part of a kingdom, not a democracy. We have a King, and he declares the laws we live by, and we cannot change them. If God says, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations' (Isaiah 56:7, Matthew 21:13) we cannot alter this universal fact. Even when the church confronts something as thorny and upsetting as the race crisis in our time, she does not have the prerogative of changing the rules by which God's house shall be run. Mind you, the Church has done so in the past. The Church has been disobedient; it is disobedient now! Never in history has the Church behaved like the Church—but the Church is always under judgment, God's judgment. And the Church must decide whether it will obey God or man. Most of the time it cannot do both.

There Are Risks

This leads us to something else. Obedience is a risky business. We cannot calculate ahead of time what the consequences of it may be. When Peter went down to Caesarea and preached in the home of Cornelius and baptized those gentiles into the fellowship of the Christian Church, he caused an uproar which precipitated a split in the Church. The next chapter of Acts mentions for the first time a 'circumcision party,' which would cause trouble for years. They were the ultra-conservatives of the day who said that just being Christian was not enough for membership. A man must become a Jew *first*, then he could become a Christian. In other words, they were laying down conditions for church mem-bership which God himself had not made. This vocal group of dissenters would hound the apostle Paul and his work among the gentiles to the end of his days.

But Peter took the risk. We can only imagine what it cost him to do it. We know that it demanded in him a change in life, a life which he had been taught from his youth was in line with the will of God. He had to enter a way of life that clashed head-on with the centuries-old traditions of his people—not only regarding Christ but regarding every other man. This act of obedience put Peter in conflict not only with non-Christian Jews but also certain leaders in the Church itself. But he did it—not because he wanted to but because he had to obey his Lord. Christians: the Church cannot behave in any other way and be the Church.

My friends, there are times when our faith is challenged by a knock at the door . . . when the things we have believed are challenged by a fresh understanding of God's Word. There are times when our doctrines are met with the need for new decisions. Look at it this way. When the Church received the Great Commission, it received it without any sense of threat or alarm. It was when the Church was disturbed by a knock at the door of Peter's house in Joppa that it had to make a decision, either to answer that challenge or become just another Jewish sect like the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Sadducees.

Decision at Joppa

> Interestingly enough, the Church was called on to make this decision at Joppa. That is the same place where Jonah made his decision NOT to answer God's call to go to other nations when he took a boat in the opposite direction. Perhaps the Church is always at Joppa, that place where it must decide the difficult questions. Be that as it may, the Church in our day faces the challenge to answer what is almost literally a knock at the door. Will we make the response of Jonah, or Peter? God give us the grace to make the right de-cision.[919]

The sermon stirred overwhelming opposition in Jackson's Covenant Presbyterian Church. The following year, Lawrence accepted a call to the Anchorage Presbyterian Church in Kentucky.

Rioting Accompanies Desegregation of Grenada Public Schools

In the autumn of 1966, State Treasurer and former Grenada Church elder William F. Winter drove from Jackson to join three ministers in his hometown, including the Rev. Emett Barfield, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, as they sought to diffuse growing racial conflict in their city. Winter told a meeting of African Americans that he would do whatever he could, "to diminish the strife that was tearing the town apart." A proposed Friday night march on the white football field to interrupt a game was delayed, but the following Monday, after Winter returned to Jackson, a riot erupted on the Grenada school grounds.

The situation was already far advanced; a boycott had been under way all summer against merchants who refused to abide by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. African American leaders were pressing for an end to racial segregation in places of public accommodation. Winter issued a statement calling on "all law-abiding citizens" to join together to resolve the ill feelings that were disrupting Grenada. He walked around the town square by himself with a petition to form a citizen's group to reestablish communication between the white and African American communities. By these actions, Winter, who was contemplating a run for governor, was taking a significant political risk, as was his pastor, whose congregation was divided over the desegregation issues.[920]

Winter subsequently led an effort to secure nearly 300 signers for a Statement of Purpose calling for re-establishment of communication between the African American and white commun-ities of Grenada, following the violence of white mobs in connection with the desegregation of the local public schools.[921]

The Presbyterian Outlook gave publicity to the work of Mississippi ministers who spoke bravely about the racial situation. One such minister was the Rev. Emett H. Barfield Jr., a native of Meridian and a graduate of Belhaven College and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Barfield was serving the second year of his first pastorate. He was minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Grenada. He preached this sermon on the Sunday following attacks by white men on African American women and children, incidents that received worldwide publicity and criticism. The sermon was printed in *The Presbyterian Outlook* on October 10, 1966:

"The Spittle of God"

> Text: "But because you are neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."
>
> —Revelation 3:14-22

Last Monday, I walked the streets of Grenada. I could not believe that I was in the United States of America. I felt more as if I were witnessing something which had happened in Germany in 1936. Frankly, for the first

[919] Robert Lawrence, "God Plays No Favorites," *Presbyterian Outlook* 147 (March 1, 1965): 5-6.

[920] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 3-4.

[921] "William Winter," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (October 3, 1966): 8.

time in my life, I was afraid. In broad, open daylight, in a small southern town which I have come to love and to call my home, I witnesses spectacles of violence unparalleled in the history of our city. A great rabble paraded about the streets with open disdain for law and order. These brave individuals carried with them pick handles, bicycle chains and Coke bottles to protect them from school children and women. They charged about the city in pick-up trucks equipped with walkie-talkies and citizen's-band radios. They used these modern devices to seek out peaceful citizens of the United States of America and their children, to persecute them, to intimidate them, and to prevent them from exercising their God-given right to dwell on this earth without fear for life and limb. I could not help thinking of the great heart of our God and how it must be breaking as he beheld school children beaten, newsmen attacked, parents, white and Negro alike, on the peaceful mission of affording safe conduct for their children to school, halted and menaced, and the lives of members of this community threatened because they believe in offering a hand of love and protection to fellow human beings assaulted by this rabble running rampant in the streets.

Mississippi Laodicea

And as I walked, many people challenged me with the same questions, 'Preacher, how can this happen? Who brought this evil upon us? What are we going to do about it?' For six long days and nights these same questions have burdened me with a dogged tenacity which will not give me peace! In prayer, I have gone repeatedly to his word, and unfailingly I have heard him say to me: 'To the church in Grenada say, "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the prime source of all God's creation: I know your ways; you are neither hot nor cold."'" The prophet of the latter day originally spoke these words to the church of Laodicea, but how pertinent they are, in fact, for us who are the church here.

Laodicea had become a tremendously wealthy town by 96 A.D. (the time of the writing of the Apocalypse). It had grown from a predominately agrarian center to an industrial community. The people of the town had grown wealthy in the transition. Even the Christians and the Christian church were wealthy, a most unusual circumstance for that period of church history. The town's economic development had been along three lines. First, there was the area of banking. Laodicea had become central in the area of finance for Asia Minor. Second, there was the textile industry; the woolens and linens of Laodicea were highly treasured prizes. Finally, Laodicea was recognized as a medical center. It was the home of excellent medical schools and it exported Phrygian ointment or collyrium, a medication for certain eye conditions.

Would you not concede a close identity between the history of Laodicea and our own town of Grenada? We, too, have come from an agricultural background, a worthy heritage, to an industrial position to be envied throughout the state. Truly, one of our boasting points is the fact that we are the center for the dominant banking chain in the northern half of our Mississippi. And like Laodicea, as we have prospered, we have cooled in our ardor for the faith.

Play It Safe

Our stand in crucial matters which face our community has been, play it safe, don't rock the boat, avoid compliance with the law as long as possible. Rather than offering a strong Christian witness in these matters, our church chose to support the status quo, also avoiding complying with the standards of church law, *The Book of Church Order*, and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. We have turned our back on principles and traditions which were dear to our ecclesiastical forefathers and the founders of our own local church. All of this has been done in the interest of maintaining a secular security rather than in affording a Christian witness. We chose a spiritual neutrality, neither to be hot nor cold. And how our sowing the seeds of the wind reaped a whirlwind last Monday!

In this hour, God is calling us to judgment for our action because he chastens the ones he loves. And he is saying to us, because we are lukewarm, that he is spitting us out. He is, in effect, holding us up to the whole world

to show us how far we are from what we thought we were. We are not rich, healthy, and filled with the good things of the world. Rather we are wretched. We are afraid of ourselves and of our neighbors. We have seen all the security and peace we thought were so dear turned to a pile of rubbish because we refused to risk them by speaking out for the rights and privileges of fellow human beings.

When we held to worldly popularity and security, the real values of life, such as freedom from fear, the guarantee of human dignity, the right to speak one's mind openly in the commonplace of human culture, we lost. By our silence, we have caused little children to suffer, and Christ has told us that anyone who causes one such little one to stumble deserves to be cast headlong into the sea, with a great millstone around his neck. We have acted like the rich fool, and have built up greater barns, thinking only of ourselves. Now in this hour of judgment all that we have is of no avail, for we are far lacking the peace for which we longed. When we ask the question, 'Who brought this on us?' we must answer, 'We ourselves.'

As for what we can do, we know our God has not left us alone, as those who have no help. Just as we utter with Paul the cry of ultimate despair, 'Who will deliver me from this body of death, there comes to us the immortal answer, 'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!' The writer of Revelation portrays Christ knocking at our door, seeking us even in this late hour to turn again unto him and become afire with zeal for him. This is not the gentle tapping of Sallman's painting of sweet Jesus meek and mild. This is the pounding of the Strong Christ of the Cross, who said unto the money changers so long ago, 'You have turned my house, which is a house of prayer, into a den of thieves.' With that same force, he is saying to us, 'Let me in, you who are the people called by my name, and be people who obey my commandments.'

Commandments of the Lord

What are these commandments which come from our Lord? First, he says, 'Buy from me the gold refined in fire.' Is there any doubt that such gold is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? This we must proclaim, not in vague generalities about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. We must proclaim this gospel with the same clarity of Peter in that first sermon in which he cut to the heart of his hearers. We too must cut through our defensive shell to where the heart of the problem is.

We need to recover the insights of Jesus on this race question. And one of the amazing things about Jesus is how he dealt with the racialism of his day. After all, he was reared in a Jewish tradition that prided itself on being the chosen people of God. He lived in an occupied territory where Roman and Jewish claims to superiority were always in conflict. However, he lived the conviction that Jew, Roman, Samaritan, and Ethiopian were equally precious in the sight of God. He went to them in their individual circumstances, and in the presence of individual needs, whether physical or spiritual, he answered them, and his healing was not limited by the pigmentation of their skin.

Someone has said that if we examine the democracy of Jesus—a democracy he never talked about in political terms but always practiced—it was based on man's relation to his brother because all men are related to God and are recipients of the love of God. Not until the Church both preaches and practices this kind of love will it have the pure gold of the gospel and will this love become a reality in the life of the Church. Only then can we be assured that such an incident as occurred Monday will not be repeated.

Next, our Christ commands that we buy the white linen of confession to keep the shame of our nakedness from being seen. I am convinced that this means we, the Church, must admit we have erred and need to put our house in order. We must admit that we, too, have contributed in word, deed, and attitude to the events of last Monday. When we Christians participate in the subtle intimidation of parents, are we not in fact encouraging the physical acts of violence against children and adults designed to prevent them from taking advantage of their legal privilege of attending the school of their choice, a legal opportunity provided by our school board for the children of this community? When responsible Christian people speak of killing this 'nig--r' or that 'nig--r,' can we really be surprised when indiscriminate acts such as we experienced Monday occur against citizens and visitors to our

community, both Negro and white? Can we sit back with a guiltless smile and condemn the redneck element of our community for their irresponsible action?

When we hear of local industries and their management personnel turning their heads while their facilities are used by conspiring laborers to design and build instruments of harassment against the Negro community, how can we wonder that these same elements feel perfectly secure in taking over our town and running it as they see fit? No, we cannot sit back in wide-eyed innocence and proclaim our purity. Each of us must cry, 'Guilty, O Lord, forgive us for we knew that we were planting thistles and briars and we cannot expect to find that they have borne grapes and figs.'

An Honest Witness

Furthermore, we, the Church, must clothe our nakedness with the white woolens of an honest witness. We must speak up for support of the responsible members of our com-munity who are seeking, at the risk of their own position in this their home, to promote peace, insure education, the maintenance of law and order, and the establishment of lines of communication. Where were the leaders of this church and the other churches of this community Monday last, when the city council sat in session in the most crucial time in the life of this community? Where were the other ministers of the churches in our town? The rabble was there, 500 strong, and it was their voice which rang out strong against law and order. . . . If you doubt their voice was heard, check all the news media throughout the land on September 13, 1966.

If the Church believes what she preaches, she cannot be silent and withdrawn from the world. We must be involved, and we must speak the truth in love. It is not the business of the Church to become a partisan political lobby, but it is its function—very much its function—to declare Christian principles relevant to the issue and to throw the searchlight of the gospel on disputed matters in such a way as to enable its people to act as citizens in the light of Christian decision. And let us say now without reservation, that when our city manager, our city attorney, our county attorney, and the board of trustees have done this, they owe us no apologies for actions past or present, but we owe them our love, prayers, and support, for they are our representatives, and as such have given the last ounce of energy for their community and for us.

Finally, we must anoint our eyes, says our Christ, to see that we must humble ourselves, and pray and seek his face, and turn from our wicked ways, if we are to resolve this problem which staggers us on this Lord's Day. Many of the issues are too great for a momentary solution from the mind of man, but they are not too great with the guidance from wisdom and strength which God can give us. If it is God's business we are engaged in, we must give God an opening into our souls. And prayer is itself a wonderful solvent of racial tension, as the women, men, boys and girls who have learned to pray together across racial lines in the schools and churches throughout this land have discovered.

When we pray for one another (not the condescending prayer which says we whites are all right and you Negroes are all wrong, or vice versa, but that we are all under the curse of original sin and in dire need of Christ's redemption), then this abominable chasm of separation which has been formed and has been made practically impassable by the irrationality of last Monday will become spanned.

A Confident Hope

In the midst of the difficulties, the heartaches, the clouds of suspicion that tend to render the question overwhelming, let us not despair. Some progress has been made in the last few days; more must be made. God lives! We are not alone. He has sent his Son in love to break down this door we have erected through human pride and shut by resolution. We *can* become 'hot' for the faith, instead of lukewarm, and thus gain peace, the true heavenly peace (not the absence of violence maintained by a massive police force) if we will but make the right decision. The prophet Elijah once challenged the children of Israel, 'If the Lord

be God, follow him, but if Baal—follow him!' As your minister on this day, I challenge you, 'if the Lord be God, follow him and live in love and peace with one another, but if Baal or Racism (as is his modern name) be god, follow him and live in hell.'[922]

The following year, Barfield accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church in Paris, Kentucky. He later returned to Mississippi to serve pastorates at Fondren Church in Jackson and at the First Church of Greenville. He also served as executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Mississippi (PCUSA).

Presbyterian Ministers Pressured to Leave their Pulpits

Presbyterians who spoke out on behalf of civil rights often found themselves at odds with members of their congregations. Segregationists mustered sufficient influence in their congrega-tions to have ministers dismissed using pressure tactics and whisper campaigns in violation of the processes and protections afforded by *The Book of Church Order*. A celebrated case in 1957 had involved the Rev. Robert B. McNeill, who was removed from the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Georgia, after he set forth his views in *Look Magazine*, urging Southerners not to delay integration until federal-state controversies were resolved. The case was similar to ongoing situations in Mississippi.

McNeill was fully willing to identify race relations as the issue. He asked the presbytery to send a commission to examine the difficulties that arose. The commission concluded that the trouble stemmed from McNeill's efforts "to relate the Gospel to the current racial problem in the South." It determined the differences to be irreconcilable and suggested that McNeill resign and seek another pastorate. When he declined to do so, the commission dissolved the pastoral relation, stating that, "The time has now come when what has been the voice of the pulpit should also become the voice of the people."

The Columbus situation received national publicity. Ralph McGill of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote about "The Agony of the Southern Minister," quoting a pastor [likely McNeill] as saying, "It is uncomfortable to see successful business and professional men, who have been old friends and strong financial props, suddenly become cold and aloof because one voices the opinion that a colored person is a child of God and has a right to worship in any of God's houses." He also spoke of the disillusionment of younger ministers, "encountering for the first time the harshness of some older men whom they had regarded as great Christian leaders."

Only about 50 of the Columbus congregation's 1,200 members had openly opposed McNeill's position, but their opposition was sufficient to remove him. *Newsweek Magazine* observed that ministers like McNeill, "have been men . . . without a country, trying to smuggle some sort of social conviction to their congregations in endless sermons about love and brotherhood, aware all the time that the instant they drop their guise of abstractions they stand to lose their pulpit." In his final sermon, McNeill warned the congregation that, "There are those in the Church who so overtly despise race prejudice that they are willing to wear a black badge of stigma until all racial injustice is wiped out." Ministers had to tread a careful path. McNeill remembered that "We were to preach on temperance but not prohibition, justice but not politics, greed but not economics, prejudice but not segregation."[923]

The situation involving McNeill and the Columbus, Georgia congregation had ominous implications. E. T. Thompson observed that, "To many it now seemed clear that a minister holding views approved by the General Assembly but unacceptable to an important group in his congregation could not expect to be supported . . . by the

[922] Emett H. Barfield, "The Spittle of God," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (October 10, 1966): 5-7.

[923] *Look Magazine* (May 28, 1957); *New York Times* (June 8, 1959); *Presbyterian Outlook* 141 (October 12, 1959); Robert McNeill, *God Wills Us Free: The Ordeal of a Southern Minister* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965): 60; cf. Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem," 24-25; Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 103; Kenneth Cauthen, *I Don't Care What the Bible Says: An Interpretation of the South* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2003); Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 133.

higher courts of the Church." A number of Mississippi pastors found this to be the case, as virtually every PCUS pastor who took a more liberal position on the integration issue was either forced or chose to the state.[924]

The Rev. Charles L. Stanford, pastor of the Jones Memorial Presbyterian Church in Meridian, a son of the First Church in Laurel—was a young minister, recently ordained. Though a native Mississippian, he did not yet possess the authority that seniority bestowed on some of the older Presbyterian ministers who spoke out. He had declared in a sermon on the Sunday following the Oxford riots that, "The horror of Ole Miss, has been the result of Christian preachers who have not been preaching the whole counsel of God to the people of God." After the sermon, Stanford noticed that one of the elders refused the Lord's Supper. Following the evening service, he happened to drive past the elder's home and realized that his session was meeting there secretly without him.[925]

The next week, Stanford was given a session resolution calling his sermon "untimely" and the references to alleged sins of the congregation "uncalled for." Attendance dropped precipitously, though Stanford found support from some of the church members, often at great personal sacrifice as they also were shunned by segregationists. Realizing that he could do no more in Meridian, he accepted a pastorate in Kentucky. In 1974, a minority of the members withdrew to form a PCA congregation.[926]

In June 1964, the pastors of First Methodist and the Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Churches in St. Augustine, Florida were driven from their pulpits for supporting church desegregation. On July 17 of the same year, two Tuskegee Institute professors, one white and one African American, entered the sanctuary of Tuskegee's First Presbyterian Church. When the Communion was administered, the elders passed over the two men. The church's pastor was the Rev. Robert Day Miller, son of Virginia's progressive Presbyterian leader and elder Francis Pickens Miller. (The elder Miller had spoken forcefully before the General Assembly on behalf of receiving African American congregations into the denomination's formerly all-white presbyteries.) Robert D. Miller took the elements to the two visitors himself, after which angry church members called for his resignation. Soon he was forced to leave and accepted a call to a church in St. Petersburg, Florida. Miller was succeeded by the Rev. Woodrow Bagby, who had served several churches in Mississippi, during whose pastorate the Tuskegee congregation was divided and a PCA segment withdrew.

In the summer of 1965, during the massive civil rights demonstrations conducted in that community, the First Presbyterian Church of Selma, Alabama—home church of the famed 19th century Congo missionary, the Rev. Samuel N. Lapsley, who had fought valiantly for the rights of the African people—refused entry to African American worshipers.[927]

During this period, the First Presbyterian Church of Starkville experienced serious internal dissention over civil rights and other issues that illustrated Mississippi Presbyterianism's alignment against more liberal denominational and social positions during this period. The Rev. Robert H. Walkup, the church's pastor, wrote of his experiences. After resigning as pastor in sadness over the seemingly irreconcilable situation, he penned a letter on November 3, 1964, to Margo Reitz Cochrane, a former Director of Christian Education in the Starkville Church. In the letter, Walkup spoke of

> . . . . The grim facts of history about which it is now possible to speak without tears. You may wish to know what happened. Well, a lot. My big mouth for one thing. My stubborn Scottish mind, and my Presbyterianism for another. As you know I stayed in a bind with some of the boys in the synod.
>
> Over my objections I was appointed chairman of the Special Judicial Commission handling the Mac Hart case. This made me some more good enemies. I defended the National Council on the floor of

[924] Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem," 24.

[925] See Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 110.

[926] Donald W. Shriver Jr., ed., *The Unsilent South: Prophetic Preaching in Racial Crisis* (Richmond: John Knox, 1965): 72-74; Charles Castner, "Ministry with Laughter and Loyalty," *Presbyterian Voice* 7 (April 1996): 7.

[927] Robert J. Norrell, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee* (New York: Knoph, 1985): 176; E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:421-22; Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007): 99.

Presbytery and forced the Stewardship Committee to put them back in the budget, and then I fought (and we beat) a move to censure the U. S. Supreme Court on the prayer case. This made me some more enemies.

All in all, Mississippi got a bit close for me. . . . But I was happy at home. I had the best and freest parish in the synod. And then came the dawn. The deacons asked the session for advice about seating Negroes. The session said seat them. It was not that simple. They actually voted two to one to seat them in a special part of the church where any who could, would sit with them and those who could not yet bear this would not have to. We asked that the matter be kept in confidence until the special section of pews could be chosen and designated. A couple of the elders unhappy with the vote left the meeting and campaigned all over town against this action. The community and even the . . . governor was drawn in along with . . . the Citizens' Council groups.

Under unbelievable pressure the session backed down and changed. Four wonderful elders stood fast: Tom Jones, Harry Simrall, Ed Sanders, and John Reeves Crumpton. These four begged me not to resign at that time and so I stayed one more year nursing the bruised hope that things would change.

Well, they changed; they got worse. Not in the congregation but in the synod and the state. I sat 90 hours on that wretched commission. I saw more 'Christian' hate than I knew existed this side of hell. My soul sickened and my mind fuzzed over. The 'boys' from Jackson made what trouble they could for me. I grew weary with the struggle and the loneliness of it all. There is nothing in this world so profound as the silence of good men.

When the President was murdered the sickness and the hate in Mississippi came out into the open and its sheer ugliness was almost beyond human comprehension. I said again and again, 'I will argue with you about politics and about the race question, but I will not argue about hate. Any Christian knows that this is sin.' So, time went on. It wasn't so bad. I knew good and well that I was not a s-- of a bi--h, and that my mother and father were married a little over 13 months before my twin brother and I were born, and I have a birth certificate to prove it, so I didn't take the abuse too seriously.

It was the frustration which drove me mad. Either I was insane, or I was talking to a lot of people who were. Men seriously believed that God could be served by hating nig---s. One of my officers came to me and told me, 'I know what you believe, but that doesn't matter. Right and wrong doesn't matter now. The only thing which matters is that this church is not going to be the first to seat a ni---r.'

Then they set up a committee to be on guard lest some poor soul slip in and hear a little bit of the gospel, lest someone for whom Christ died, hear of the One who was despised and rejected. Can you imagine good sensible men, decent folk, organized to protect the church from worshipers? Shades of T. S. Eliot.

That did it. I said nothing more. I just left. I could never have endured the confrontation when any human being was told that there was no place for him in the church of our Lord. To be sure it broke my heart. . . . I wept until there were no more tears and cold anger swept over me. That frightened me for I knew what anger could do.

By William G. McAtee's account, Walkup almost lost his life under mysterious circumstances. One day, while putting a match to his pipe, he noticed an unlit space heater in his office with the gas jet opened and pouring gas into the room. Encouragement came from outside the state. Walkup was awarded an honorary doctorate by Southwestern at Memphis in 1963. In 1964, he accepted a pastorate in McAllen, Texas. He later served Idlewild Church in Memphis, where it was largely due to his ministry that the congregation welcomed its first African American members in 1971. Walkup's successor in Starkville was the Rev. Leslie C. Tucker, a son of the Canton Church and recent seminary graduate.[928]

[928] McAtee, Dreams, 318; Scott Wilds to R. Milton Winter, August 24, 2014; Magness, *History of Idlewild Presbyterian Church,* 61.

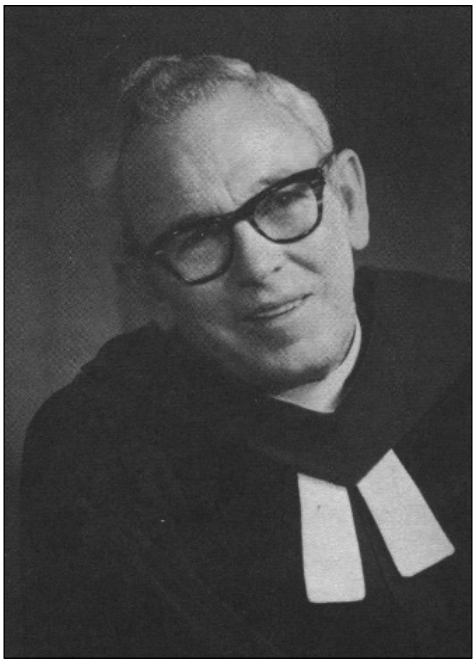
The Rev. Robert H. Walkup Writes About Changes in Mississippi's Church and Society

In February 1965, shortly after moving to Texas, the Rev. Robert H. Walkup reflected on his experiences in Mississippi for *The Presbyterian Survey*. He drew parallels for the Church in Mississippi from his studies in college of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, whom Walkup remembered as, "the indecisive prince with a troubled conscience." He wrote:

> The Church is in the midst of a world which has changed. All the old landmarks we knew when we were children are gone. Our very souls feel nostalgia. Half of the science we learned in high school and college is obsolete. The comfortable pattern of life has been changed almost beyond recognition. 'They' (that's as good a name as any) are going to integrate our schools, our hotels, and now our restaurants. In a changing world we long for stability, for something which does not change. Our last refuge is the Church. 'They' cannot change her. We will keep her as she was when we were children in the good old days when darkies sang their bittersweet songs for us to hear; when eggs were ten cents a dozen and we had a poorhouse in every county for people who had no eggs; when a simple gospel was preached and we worried about card playing, drinking, and things like that. The ministers knew better than to meddle in political matters. (But we never did know much about John Calvin or John Knox either. We forget that the simple gospel which they preached frequently had tremendous political overtones.) But we sigh for the good old days, when a man could be saved and go to heaven without anybody meddling with his prejudices. Life was simpler (grimmer, too, but we forget so easily), and the copybook virtues went unchallenged.
>
> The sign on the church bulletin board read, 'All are Welcome.' But people knew that meant white folks only. And now all this is in danger. Indeed, it is almost gone, save for the Church. Here is the last hope for the good old days—the last valiant and gallant stand against the flow of history and the tide of time. If we lose here, all is lost. The Church must be held at all costs. Anybody who would bring in this conflict which is raging in the world is a traitor and a threat to everything we cherish.
>
> Now, obviously, this is an overstatement, and this, I think, is needed so some truths may be gleaned from it. For here is the Church's temptation to live; she can remain popular and respected, if not revered. She can live only if she will accommodate, if she will make peace with conditions as they are about her, if she will offer sanctuary for men who fear the future, worship the past, and fight the present.
>
> What sort of men are these? Most of them are good men. Oh, there are evil men who want to use the Church, but these are good men—good husbands, good fathers, good churchmen—according to their lights. They are also troubled men. They are alert to danger; they fear for the Church. This fear is a temptation to them. . . . [They] do not want to see [the Church] torn by strife. Outside the Deep South it is hard to remember that these men are not bigots and racists. But we . . . must understand; we simply must know that these are good men, by and large, deeply troubled, and sorely tempted.

"Never," said Walkup, "has any part of the Church been more sorely tempted to be or not to be the Church."[929]

[929] Robert H. Walkup, "Tempted to Live or to Die," *Presbyterian Survey* 55 (February 1965): 26-27.



—Idlewild Presbyterian Church.

The Rev. Robert L. Walkup was one of Mississippi's leading clergy voices on behalf of racial justice.

The 1969 General Assembly had directed the Synod of Mississippi to counsel with congre-gations that maintained exclusionary seating policies. (The synod responded with surprise, reporting that as the Assembly did not obtain this information through statistical reports, it had no way of knowing if there were, in fact, such congregations with exclusionary policies within its bounds.) The synod then passed, without comment, a resolution citing the Directory for Worship—that worshipers were to be welcomed without regard to race—was sent to all churches in the presbytery, urging them to honor "the spirit as well as the letter of the law."[930]

Vestiges of enforced segregation persisted in some places. The minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery, for example, noted on January 27, 1970, that "Whereas it has come to the attention of the Commission on the Minister and His Work that there are some sessions within our bounds that have failed to adhere to the spirit and the letter of *The Book of Church Order*, paragraph 201-5, which declares that: 'No one shall be excluded from participation in public worship in the Lord's House on the grounds of race, color, or class.' Therefore, be it resolved that St. Andrew Presbytery call to the attention of all sessions within its bounds that it is their responsibility to carry out the spirit and letter of this part of our standards."[931]

National Council of Churches Actions Arouse White Mississippians' Ire

The actions of the National Council of Churches in working among African Americans (the PCUS was an NCC member), played a prominent role in the struggle for civil rights in the American South and occasioned much controversy within the and beyond the denomination, especially among segregationist Mississippians. As Clive Webb wrote, the NCC's activities stirred conservative fears "that a subversive version of Christianity" was being propagated that would undermine the standing racial order in Mississippi. Long-standing Mississippi opposition

[930] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1969): 55; Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 27, 1970): 17.

[931] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 27, 1970): 17.

to the NCC guaranteed a cold reception for the NCC's efforts in the state even before they began. There would be stout opposition for years to come.[932]

Central Mississippi Presbytery—a perennial opponent of PCUS membership in the Federal and National Councils, principally because of its ecumenical activities and strong statements on social justice issues—approved a motion on January 17, 1963, urging the denomination's withdrawal from the NCC. That April, at the PCUS General Assembly, the Rev. John Reed Miller had been a commissioner representing the Central Mississippi Presbytery. The Assembly voted down an overture asking that the denomination withdraw from the NCC because of its involvement in civil rights. Miller spoke against a recent NCC proposal to recruit youth for civil rights work in the Delta, calling the effort, "an invasion . . . without invitation from responsible Protestant churches in the Delta." Commissioners, however, increased PCUS financial support for the NCC. [933]

Taking heart from the support of the PCUS and other denominational governing bodies, the National Council determined to move forward with its work in the South. In June 1963, during the week following the murder of NCC field secretary Medgar Evers, it created an Emergency Commission on Religion and Race, headed by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., labor leader Walter Reuther, and UPUSA stated clerk, Eugene Carson Blake. It began a civil rights and human assistance project in Mississippi. The ministry aimed to help African American sharecroppers in the Delta counties and elsewhere in the state, also supervising federally funded health clinics in Mound Bayou and Greenville. These Mississippians owned little beyond their own labor, and this sharecropping system further impoverished them. As a result of fraud or overcharging, the cost of the supplies and tools they received on credit advanced from the owner to produce a crop and provide for their families usually exceeded the proceeds the sharecroppers received from the sale of their shares of the crop.

The NCC's action represented an intensification of its efforts on behalf of civil rights. Although the Rev. Will Campbell, former Southern Baptist chaplain at the University of Mississippi, had represented NCC interests in early attempts to encourage peaceful white acceptance of change (as when he had gone to Little Rock to accompany African American children to school during the 1957 desegregation crisis), the organization had otherwise avoided direct participation in the Southern civil rights struggle, relying instead upon issuing resolutions and pronouncements.[934]

Still, by 1963, there was growing determination throughout the nation and in the leadership of the various denominations that comprised the NCC that direct intervention in the Deep South was needed, and that the local churches were either unable or unwilling to address the plight of the African American poor in their region. The problem had been building for years, but as the federal War on Poverty effort arose, church leaders felt increased responsibility to assist. The situation in Mississippi was judged to be the most desperate, and all recognized that its causes were complex.

Beginning in the late 1940s, machines had increasingly replaced sharecroppers, marginalizing many workers. Thousands of African Americans moved to Northern cities seeking a better life. Those who remained often were described as "the poorest of the poor." Younger Blacks departed, often leaving children with relatives until they could become established. These migrations left behind an African American populace in the 18 counties in and bordering the Mississippi Delta that was disproportionately comprised of the very young and the very old. Between 1950 and 1960, more than 200,000 African Americans had left these counties. There had also been a change in white attitudes toward African Americans. Whereas during the 1927 flood, white Red Cross workers had refused to allow the evacuation to Vicksburg of Blacks driven from their homes by the rising waters, turning back riverboats that had come to Greenville for fear that if allowed to leave, many would never return to the plantations.

[932] Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 28, 30; cf. Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[933] See James F. Findlay Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[934] See R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake: Prophet With Portfolio* (New York: Seabury, 1978): 77-105; Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 4.

Now, white leaders wished to be rid of the largely unemployed and elderly African American population, as it placed a burden on taxpayers to support what few welfare and social services were available.[935]

Conditions of poverty and deprivation were appalling, rivaling those in the world's most underdeveloped countries. In 1960, Mississippi's Sunflower County had 11,818 housing units, of which 6,264 lacked flush toilets, 7,265 lacked bathing facilities, and 4,593 lacked piped water. Tunica County had 5,130 homes, 4,005 without flush toilets and 4,134 without facilities for bathing. No African American high school in the area was accredited.

The dilemma was complicated by the fact that most of the region's poorest residents had no political voice. In 1960, only 5.2% of Mississippi's eligible African American population was registered to vote. This was especially true in the Delta counties. In 1961, 612 of 20,600 eligible African Americans in Bolivar County were registered; only 472 of 16,933 were registered in Leflore. Only two were registered in Humphreys County and none were registered in Issaquena. As a result of voter disenfranchisement laws, a much smaller percentage of the adult population voted in the American South than in other sections of the country. Not only were few African Americans permitted to register, but payment of the poll tax represented a significant outlay for people who lived in poverty. African American voters could not therefore elect representatives nor set tax rates for social programs. As a result of their inability to register to vote, Blacks were also excluded from jury service, as prospective juror lists were compiled from the list of registered voters.[936]

The NCC efforts to assist African Americans were seen as a direct threat to the segregationist power structure. When organizations allied with the National Council assisted in the Mississippi civil rights effort, segregationist criticism followed. These criticisms were voiced both in the secular press and by some church leaders. The Rev. Robert C. Duhs, pastor of Vicksburg's Westminster Presbyterian Church, brought an overture to Central Mississippi Presbytery on July 18, 1963, specifying reasons for opposition to the NCC and its work. The overture asserted that the National Council had "in the name of 40,000,000 people"—the entire membership of the denominations that were members—without proper authorization—had "urged the support of President Kennedy's plan for general and complete disarmament and the abolishment of all armies and all weapons except those needed for internal order and a new United Nations Peace Force, as well as advocacy of "the management and control of such news media as radio and television through greater power granted to the Federal Communications Commission. The council had urged support for the Supreme Court "decision . . . prohibiting reading of the Bible and prayers in the public schools." The overture also cited NCC's support for use of economic pressure as a tool for addressing racial tensions, its "approval of mass demonstrations . . . even if this means breaking the law; to support sit-in, stand-in-and kneel-in activities." It alleged that the National Council had contributed money, "given for the spread of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ," to support "ques-tionable movements such as the NAACP, SCLC, CORE," "and [to assist] men who are involved in controversial causes—or their families in the case of the death of such men." A matter of immediate concern was stated as the council's sending of five ministers to Clarksdale at the request of the local NAACP chapter, but contrary to the wishes of the local (white) ministerial association "to cause dissension and unrest." The overture asked that the General Assembly withdraw from the NCC, "and should the body fail to do this, that the matter of withdrawal from the NCC should be sent to the presbyteries for their "advice and consent."[937]

St. Andrew Presbytery, in which the Clarksdale activities of NCC workers had taken place, appointed a Special Committee Concerning the Work and Activity of the National Council of Churches, chaired by the Rev. T. Robert Fulton of Greenville, along with the Rev. George W. Long of Tupelo and elders Erst Long and W. C. Stinson. The committee confined its report to NCC activities in Clarksdale, for it was alleged NCC activity there that brought forth the charges against the council and prompted the presbytery to appoint the committee.

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[935] See John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

[936] Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: The Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004): 10-11; cf. Michael Vinson Williams, "With Determination and Fortitude We Came to Vote: Black Organization and Resistance to Voter Suppression in Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 74 (Fall 2012): 195-237.

[937] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 18, 1963): 135–36.

Fulton reported, October 13, 1963, on a lengthy personal conference with Colin Williams, executive director of the Board of Evangelism for the NCC, who was responsible for the initiative taken by the council the preceding summer in Clarksdale. Williams submitted a written com-munication expressing deep regret over misunderstandings that had developed. He disclaimed any intention to encourage demonstrations in Clarksdale, stating that the NCC had not sent official representatives to Clarksdale, but did acknowledge "actions taken hastily and perhaps ill-advisedly in encouraging representatives from several denominations to go to Clarksdale." He conceded that this was done without sufficient consultation with local ministers. According to Williams, the NCC's Clarksdale initiative "was entirely a reconciliation effort between white and Negro leaders." The committee concluded that there were "many factors in the Clarksdale occurrence involving the National Council which the Committee cannot properly evaluate." It observed that "It seems there are certain persons who claim identification with the National Council but who have no official status with the Council." The committee believed that "Perhaps this one factor has led to more misunderstanding than any other."

After debate, by a vote of 46 to 26, the presbytery submitted an overture to the General Assembly calling for its withdrawal from the NCC. The Revs. J. W. Flanagan Jr., of Southaven, William G. McAtee of Amory, Frank L. Seaman of Sardis, R. H. Walkup of Starkville, and Edwin R. Wilson of the First Church in Corinth, as well as elder A. K. Dexter of the Corinth Church, asked that their names be recorded as voting against the overture.[938]

The session of the Brookhaven Church also registered its protest against the NCC in the autumn of the same year. It sent an overture on November 7, 1963, asking South Mississippi Presbytery to request that the General Assembly withdraw financial support from the NCC. The elders charged that, "Increasingly the National Council issues pronouncements, endorses actions, and spends funds on political and social matters on which intelligent Christians have widely divergent views." They believed that such actions and policies, "rather than contributing to the unity which the Council says it seeks, are divisive and productive of ill-will." The session concluded that, "Tragic as it may be, it would seem that the only language that draws attention today is the language measured in dollars and cents. It is for this reason that we overture the Presbytery of South Mississippi to pursue this action."[939]

In the spring of 1964, Central Mississippi Presbytery took note that the National and World Councils of Churches had called upon Christians from all over the world, including Africa, "to send a task force of men and money 'to wage war' on 'persistent poverty and racial injustice' in the Mississippi Delta—this area having been chosen 'because it manifested in full display the chronic problems of discrimination and destination.'" The presbytery strongly protested this decision, which, it asserted, "will promote lawlessness and the flagrant violation of the inherent rights of all the citizens of the State of Mississippi." The presbyters declared that "such action will certainly result in violence, bloodshed, and possible death. The preaching of the Word of God would be seriously hindered, and relations between the races would be disrupted." They went on: "Be it further resolved that we do not recognize the National Council or World Council of Churches as our spokesmen in this area, and request that they desist from any further plans to come into the South for purposes that could only cause unrest and hatred among men of all races." Copies of the resolution were sent to the various ecclesiastical bodies referred to as well as *The Clarion-Ledger*, *Jackson Daily News*, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, the Associated Press, United Press International, and local television stations WJTV and WLBT.[940]

Duhs continued to pursue the matter. When the Synod of Mississippi convened June 2, 1964, Duhs offered a resolution, reading as follows:

> WHEREAS, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches did in August, 1963, unanimously adopt a statement which declares in part, 'We therefore repeat, with all the conviction at our command . . . that any form of segregation based on race, color, or ethnic origin is contrary to the Gospel, and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the Church. . . .

[938] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (October 15, 1963): 31-32, 39-40.

[939] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (November 7, 1963): 28.

[940] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 16, 1964): 14.

Wherever and whenever any of us Christians deny this, by action or inaction, we betray Christ and the fellowship which bears His name;

AND WHEREAS such a statement forces the judgment of betraying and being disloyal upon countless saints called home to Glory and others yet living;

AND WHEREAS, 'the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son,' and His Word speaks of Satan as the accuser of our brethren;

AND WHEREAS, the National Council in its report to the 104th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. (Assembly's Blue Book, page 133) relates how the General Board commissioned its Race Relations Committee to take 'bold, swift and courageous action in race demonstrations,' even if it meant breaking the law;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That the Synod of Mississippi disavow any pronouncements of the World and National Councils of Churches reflecting upon anyone's loyalty or orthodoxy, or in any matter whatsoever,

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That any financial assistance given to either or both of these groups be discontinued immediately. . . .

By a vote of 76 to 22, the synod declined to adopt the overture. The resolution was modified to say that "The Synod of Mississippi heartily endorses the present policy of the General Council of our Church in refusing to contribute to the Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of Churches for use in its so-called 'Special Mississippi Project' and emphatically urges that this policy be continued. [The] Synod of Mississippi deplores the nature and extent of the activities and the pronouncements of the Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of Churches. Synod is convinced that such extreme activities and pronouncements do not promote the cause of Christ, but on the contrary are detrimental to true Christian race relations." Noting that its three constituent presbyteries had withheld all funds for the National and World Councils, the synod deleted its allocations for the NCC and WCC from its 1965 budget, designating the funds toward church extension within the state. [941]

On July 19, 1964, the session of the First Church in Greenwood sent an overture to St. Andrew Presbytery, taking exception to NCC support for projects "that are not only contrary to the customs, beliefs and practices of the members of this church but are in direct opposition to our beliefs and are detrimental to the peaceful relationship that formerly existed among both the white and negro [*sic*] citizens." The session stated its intention that because of the presbytery's continued mem-bership in the NCC, that it would instruct its treasurer "to make distribution of all funds collected for benevolences directly to the various agencies we wish to support, rather than . . . have the benevolent funds distributed through a central treasurer of the presbytery . . . [to] avoid the possibility of diverting any funds contributed by members of this church to the National Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches." The session urged the presbytery to take similar action.[942] The session's action with regard to distributions through the presbytery's central treasurer indicated growing sessional distrust of the higher governing body.

Delta Ministry Initiated

The NCC's Delta Ministry, inaugurated in the summer of 1964, was one of its most controversial. It was undertaken to identify indigenous African American leadership in Mississippi and assist in development of

[941] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 2, 4, 1964); *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (June 29, 1964): 4.

[942] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (July 14, 1964): 24-25.

economic solutions for poor people in the state. Projects included distributing food and clothing, citizenship and literacy training, as well as fair employment campaigns and school desegregation.[943]

To allay white fears, the outreach was described as a "ministry of services of direct relief developed to relieve suffering." It would establish communication between the African American and white communities, develop local leadership, and create community centers for literacy and job training. No mention was made of the civil rights movement, African American disenfranchisement, or segregation. NCC leaders stated that representatives of the state's white denominations would be invited to collaborate with and advise the ministry.[944]

The effort met with early success. The Delta Ministry pressured six of the 18 Mississippi counties that chose not to participate in the federal surplus commodities program to sign up or let the ministry act as a distributing agency in their place. Although the commodities were free, some counties had refused to participate, as they had to pay the handling costs involved. Nine counties (all outside the Delta) were prompted to join federal food programs, and by the end of July 1965, all but two of the state's counties had some sort of food distribution program, making use of surplus farm commodities purchased by the U. S. government under its farm price support program. More than 100,000 people received food through of efforts by NCC workers.[945]

Criticism came from many quarters. Many white Mississippians were angered by reports in the press concerning NCC activities in their state. The session of Jackson's Briarwood Church adopted a resolution stating that, "We must insist that such actions will certainly result in violence and bloodshed, and possibly death. The preaching of the Word of God would be seriously hindered, and relations between the races disrupted." Even the liberal-leaning editor Hodding Carter Jr. of Greenville's *Delta Democrat-Times* referred to the Delta Ministry leaders as "inept, inefficient revolutionaries."

The PCUS representative to the NCC's Division of Home Missions opposed the Delta Ministry, as did the Rev. T. Watson Street, executive secretary of the PCUS's Board of World Missions. Street wrote a lengthy article for *The Presbyterian Outlook* in June 1964, explaining the complexities of the situation. He asserted that "A good many churchmen in Mississippi affirm that leaders of the Mississippi Delta Project never came to Mississippi to sit down with the church leaders in that area," and charged that, "If these things are true, then the WCC has departed from the missionary philosophy it advocates for the overseas operations of American mission boards."[946]

Many Mississippians looked to Memphis and were shocked when the Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, a son of the First Presbyterian Church in Corinth, a former pastor at Tchula, Lexington, and Greenville, and now pastor of Idlewild Presbyterian Church in Memphis, urged his people to continue support for the NCC in the aftermath of its activities during the summer of 1964 in nearby Clarksdale, Mississippi. Jones had been outspoken in his call for racial justice. He likened those who impeded progress to Pharaoh in a sermon entitled, "Let My People Go," saying that, "There are some who hold, even today, that the problem of a minority racial group living in the midst of a majority of another race is a social and political problem and not religious at all. Let the Church stay out of it, they say. But folks of that persuasion find themselves lined right up with Pharaoh." He went on to say that "God is concerned . . . and lifting up his powerful right arm of judgment to break the arm of the oppressor in the very historic events of our day."[947]

In a sermon, "God's Agents," preached in Idlewild Church on September 6, 1964, Jones addressed the criticism of the NCC. He said that "The prevailing idea most frequently encountered went something like this: 'Civil rights is a political matter; the Church has no business meddling in politics; the Church's mission is to save souls; the National Council should stay out of what doesn't concern it." The sermon was an attempt to furnish facts where

[943] See Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: The Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer, Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[944] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 12.

[945] [932] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 44

[946] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 19, 28; T. Watson Street, "The Mississippi Delta Project," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (June 29, 1964): 7.

[947] Paul Tudor Jones, *Raising the God Question* (Louisville: Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1987): 8.

there seemed to be much misunderstanding and to interpret the mission of the Church in terms of the ministry of reconciliation. Since the sermon addressed a certain conception of the PCUS doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, reactions to the sermon were divided. Taking as a text, Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and not do the things that I say," Jones noted that

> Many faithful church members in recent weeks have asked me questions about the National Council of Churches. 'Are we, Presbyterians, in the National Council?' they ask. 'Is it true that the National Council is responsible for this Mississippi Summer Project which has stirred up so much trouble? How much money do we at Idlewild give to the National Council of Churches?'
>
> When I have tried to answer such questions or to help people get hold of the information they are seeking from reliable sources, in many instances the dilemma of these faithful people instead of being resolved has rather been confounded.
>
> For example, the question, 'Is the National Council responsible for the Mississippi Summer Project?' Investigation reveals that the National Council of Churches did not originate the Mississippi Summer Project; that it does not sponsor it; that it 'did not recruit the 450 student volunteers now conducting literacy and voter education classes in Mississippi,' and 'has no control over policy, strategy, rationale or personnel in the Summer Project'—and that all this is done by a coordination of such organizations as CORE, SNCC, and NAACP. Investigation also reveals that the National Council of Churches did offer to set up training schools for the volunteers and equip them with knowledge, attitudes, and techniques for carrying out this project. At this, many of my interrogators have said: "This is just as bad, if not worse.'
>
> Investigation of the National Council of Churches' financing shows that our whole denomination gives to NCC annually just $8,000. Idlewild Church's share in this for 1964 will be a little less than $50. But not one cent of Southern Presbyterian money has gone into the financing of the NCC part in the Mississippi Summer Project. That program has been financed entirely by voluntary contributions given for that specific project by individuals and denominations that elected to participate. Our Southern Presbyterian Church did not elect to participate.
>
> The facts concerning our membership in the Council are equally disquieting to some. The NCC is not a super church, in which individuals or local congregations hold membership. It is "a Council of Churches" or denominations. Membership is through denominational affiliation. Our General Assembly votes to belong or to get out. There is no such thing as an individual or a congregation joining or getting out of the Council. It has been upsetting to many people that they cannot register their protest about the Council's activity by withholding funds (since they do not give) nor by getting out (since membership is not an individual or congregational affair). So, what is to be done?

Jones turned to a theological appeal based on the teaching and example of Jesus:

> Let me suggest that our controversy with the National Council of Churches is really symptomatic of a deeper concern. We aren't getting the help we need on this problem because we aren't asking the right questions. Here are the real questions we need to ask:
>
> (1) What is the mission of the church of Jesus Christ in the world?
> (2) Who is doing God's work in the world today?
> (3) Is the church? Am I? If the church and I are not doing his work and others are, what should be my attitude toward whomever God uses as his agents?
>
> The Gospel of Luke records in the fourth chapter the launching of Jesus' Galilean ministry. On the Sabbath he went into the synagogue at Nazareth, where he had been brought up. He was invited to read the lesson from the prophets. He chose Isaiah 61:1-2: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath

anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord' And he closed the scroll and said: 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'

E. Stanley Jones called this 'The Christian Manifesto.' The Lord of the Church was laying down his platform. The Church, when she has been true to her Lord, has taken this manifesto for her marching orders. She has preached the good news of God's grace to the poor. She has brought healing and help to brokenhearted and hopeless peoples everywhere. She has fought oppression and injustice and, in every way, effected deliverance of men who were captives of fear, of superstition, of oppressive social, economic, and political systems. She has brought sight to the blind—not only physical sight, but also sight to the spiritually blind who could not recognize the grace of God, and the intellectually blind whose eyes had not been opened to the mysteries of the printed page and the powers of the enlightened mind.

When the now infamous Mississippi Project of CORE, SNCC, SCLC, and the NAACP was launched in June and the 450 young American college students began their work, it was announced that they would engage in a threefold mission:

(1) They would carry on relief work among destitute Negroes—the poorly housed, the ill-fed, the sick; they would bring in and give away clothing and groceries and drugs.
(2) They would teach adult illiterates to read and white. They would organize schools meeting in churches and homes to equip men and women with this basic skill upon which all development of the best human resources depends.
(3) They would train native-born American Negro citizens how to qualify to vote and assume responsible leadership.

Jones pointed out that Rotary Clubs sponsored literacy programs as a humanitarian project, that Idlewild Church collected clothing, food, and medicine and sent them to destitute persons all over the world, as did the Red Cross, and that the local Republican Association was conducting a voter registration drive and wanted the churches' help in making announcements to urge that people register and vote. Such activities, he noted, occasioned no outcry:

I may know little about the ideals of organizations such as CORE, SNCC, SCLC, the NAACP; but these facts are evident to all:

(1) Under the auspices of these organizations 450 college young people volunteered to carry on without pay the above-mentioned threefold mission. They agreed to live in substandard conditions through their whole vacation time, to support themselves and to carry with them their own bail money in the event that they were jailed for engaging in such humanitarian relief and educational work.
(2) These young people have followed a non-violent approach in all their endeavors. There has not been a single instance of assault by one of them, though some of them have been insulted, beaten, and murdered while on their mission.

Jones repeated the admonition of Gamaliel, "Israel's wise old teacher," who said to his colleagues concerning the early Christians, "Take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. . . . Refrain from these men and let them alone: for if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:35, 38-39). He closed, saying

> For us today, the real question is not: 'Am I for or against the National Council of Churches and its participation in the Mississippi Summer Project?' We have deeper and more serious questions to ponder: 'What is the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ? Am I actively engaged in that mission? Does my Lord today find me fighting for or against him? What should my attitude be toward those who are performing a Christ-like ministry which I refrain from performing'[948]

Scots Presbyterian was Among Civil Rights Volunteers Who Served in Mississippi

Iain Whyte, a Scottish divinity student, spent the summer of 1964 at Columbia Seminary, traveling each weekend to conduct services at the Presbyterian Church in Guntersville, Alabama. By his recollection, "I entered the South on a Greyhound Bus on July 2, when Dr. King was in Washington observing President Lyndon Johnson sign the Civil Rights Bill, that first national legislation to extend human rights to African Americans, then termed 'negroes.' That same evening Lester Maddox, later to be governor of Georgia, announced that he had axe handles to give to any in his restaurant who wanted to assist him in resisting integration." At Columbia Seminary, then still de facto an all-white campus, Whyte found a variety of viewpoints. "Many young Southerners found themselves torn between recognizing the evils of this system, that was another form of slavery and being loyal to traditions in which they had been brought up. One evening a student from Mississippi was in tears when he said to me, 'I know as a Christian that this system is entirely wrong. But how do I go back to my family and tell them that? They believe that it's enshrined in the Bible.'"

Later that summer, Whyte volunteered to serve with civil rights workers in Mississippi, assisting with the Freedom Schools being set up for African American children. "When I reported for duty in Greenville, the official from SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) looked at me. 'If there's trouble,' he said, 'Don't think your Scottish passport [*sic*] will save you.'" Whyte stayed in the home of a 95-year-old African American gentleman. Albert Peters, who had been born five years after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, professed no fear. "I'm 95. They can't do anything to me now." Whyte participated in an effort to desegregate the local movie theater and with his group of protesters, he was surrounded by a heavily armed contingent of Mississippi Highway Patrolmen. When the time came for him to return to Atlanta by bus, it was not deemed safe for him to walk alone from the SNCC office to the bus station; he had to be sent incognito in a taxi driven by a sympathetic African American.

Forty-Year Reflections on Mississippi's Freedom Summer

Writing in *The Christian Century*, the Rev. Edward McNulty, then-pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New York recalled the 20th anniversary of his participation in Mississippi's Freedom Summer:

> Today the vast expanse of the Delta cotton fields looks much the same as then. Gone, of course, was the feeling that we were traveling through enemy territory. No need now to phone ahead to our destination and, on arrival, to phone back to home base that we were safe. The green fields stretched for miles. Few houses of any size were visible as we raced along the straight highway, just clusters of dilapidated shacks. Now that machines had replaced hand pickers, many of the falling-down houses were vacant. [Passing Cleveland], I wondered what had happened to the white Presbyterian minister whom Roger and I had called on. He had many of the same books in his library as I, yet we were worlds apart. He knew of no poverty in his area, nor of any wrongs committed. Polite to us, he nevertheless regarded us as outsiders, not fellow American Christians who could help each other. He urged us to tell the students to shave and bathe

[948] Paul Tudor Jones, "God's Agents," a sermon preached September 6, 1964, reprinted in Shriver, *The Unsilent South*, 131-37; also published as, "What is the Church's Mission?" *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (November 2, 1964): 5-6.

more often. We refrained from telling him how difficult maintaining one's personal grooming was, when the only running water available for a square block was a pump in the backyard of the shack we slept in.[949]

UPUSA Clergy Come to Hattiesburg for Mississippi Ministers' Project

Throughout 1963, civil rights activists in Birmingham and Jackson had tested the range of the South's segregation laws, specifically by attempting to integrate certain white-controlled churches. These efforts were carefully observed by segregationist Mississippians, so that congregations like Galloway Methodist, First Baptist, and First Presbyterian in downtown Jackson formalized strict entrance policies to keep their services of worship white-only. On June 30, 1963, Hattiesburg's Bay Street Presbyterian Church had followed suit. The policy called for the offer of a taxi ride to "a Negro Church," which offer, if refused, "we will be forced to call the Police to take them away for disturbing Public Worship."[950]

In 1962, Forrest County (in which the city of Hattiesburg was located) contained 10,925 registered voters, of which only 22 were African American. Out of a reported 7,745 African American of voting age, only 0.3%was registered to vote. Those attempting to register were subjected to tests, such as interpretation of passages from the state constitution, and other questions that were not put to white applicants. Oral histories from Hattiesburg's African Americans described the tactics used by the registrar, Theron Lynd. His friend George Currie, an elder in the First Presbyterian Church, recalled that, "Theron was prejudiced against [blacks]." On July 15, 1963, Lynd was found guilty of civil discrimination and was required to register 43 African Americans whose applications had been rejected. Still, only 3.1% of eligible African Americans were registered.[951]

As protests led by activist groups SNCC and CORE drew attention to racial discrimination in Hattiesburg, the idea of inviting white clergy to participate was raised. To secure ministerial support, SNCC and CORE petitioned the National Council of Churches for assistance. The NCC passed the request on to the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The UPUSA's Commission on Religion and Race issued an appeal to ministers willing to travel to Hattiesburg. Fifty-two clergy from across the nation answered the call. Just over half of these, a group of 32, came from the UPUSA. "The visiting ministers joined local African Americans in their effort to win social, political, and economic equality. They also hoped to capitalize on their similarities with the local white population and to foster positive relationships among Hattiesburg's white churches."[952]

The UPUSA's Commission on Religion and Race also approved sending clergy to Hattiesburg in the belief that the presence of ministers might assure publicity that would discourage violence against African Americans as they demonstrated and sought to register to vote. The ministers walked with Blacks entering the courthouse en route to the Circuit Clerk's office where voter registration applications were submitted. African Americans had been repeatedly threatened and harassed as they tried to enter the Hattiesburg courthouse for this purpose.

On January 22, the visiting clergy participated in a Freedom Day sponsored by the UPUSA's Commission on Religion and Race, with assistance from similar councils in the Episcopal Church and the Rabbinical Assembly of America. The group was comprised of 32 Presbyterians (all members of the UPUSA), ten Episcopalians, two rabbis, a Unitarian, and several from the Meth-odist Church, and the Disciples of Christ. Among the Presbyterians was the Rev. John Coventry Smith, a ranking UPUSA leader in ecumenical work. The ministers manned a picket line outside the Forrest County courthouse.[953]

The Rev. Emil J. Hattoon, assistant pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Illinois, along with the Rev. Robert Moore, a professor in that city's Millikin College, a UPUSA institution, arrived in Hattiesburg on

[949] Edward McNulty, "The Mississippi Freedom Summer Twenty Years Later," *Christian Century* (October 17, 1984).

[950] Sessional records of the Bay Street Presbyterian Church (June 30, 1963), cited in Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 25.

[951] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 31.

[952] [939] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 7-8; see Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 46.

[953] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," *Divine Agitators*, 49; *Presbyterian Life* (February 15, 1964): 33; Heuser, "Presbyterians and the Struggle for Civil Rights," 13.

January 27, 1964. The next day, he was arrested with eight other UPUSA ministers for marching in a restricted area: the sidewalks surrounding the Forrest County Courthouse. The activists used their arrests to attract national interest in and support for their efforts. *Presbyterian Life*, the UPUSA monthly magazine, declared that the arrests were a blatant attempt to remove protesting clergy from Hattiesburg.[954]

As the congregation's historian describes the deliberations of the session in the Decatur, Illinois church, the elders asked both ministers to answer three questions, "Is the request bona fide, having the support of national leaders? Is the risk, expense, and time justified?" and "Is the whole situation church oriented as against politically motivated?"[955]

Robert Patrick Rayner, a historian of the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project, observed that "these questions suggest that Northern Presbyterian church leaders understood the gravity and consequences of their actions. The ministers did not base their decision to participate on whether or not racial discrimination and social injustice existed in Hattiesburg. Rather, when Northern churches approved their ministers joining the ranks of protestors, picketers, and demonstrators, they declared that civil rights protest fell within the responsibilities of their ministry and the ministry of the Presbyterian Church" [that is, the UPUSA]. This definition of the Church's role in society greatly differed from that of Hattiesburg's Presbyterian ministers."[956]

Those who came to Mississippi to advocate for civil rights were seen as outsiders. An editorial in *The Hattiesburg American* stated that we "will be better off once all the 'meddlers' from far-away places have returned home to try and cope with their own problems and left us free to deal peacefully and quietly with ours."[957]

Hattiesburg PCUS Pastors Denounce Visiting Ministers' "Intrusion"

Five days after the UPUSA ministers arrived to support the voter registration effort, white Hattiesburg Presbyterian leaders publicly denounced the visiting ministers' "intrusion" into local affairs, contending that ministers should not involve themselves in social or political matters. Some objected to their presence, not on civil rights grounds, but raised theological concerns, alleging that the Northern Presbyterians were seeking to lend ecclesiastical sanction to political agendas. As historian Rayner observed, "Their focus on theological debates" encouraged conservative Presbyterians "to oppose civil rights activism while they simultaneously defended the status quo."

On January 27, 1964, the sessions of the three white churches issued a joint statement declaring that, "We are not in sympathy" with the picketing ministers who they believed were "out of accord with the doctrinal standards and the historic position of the Presbyterian Church in the United States." The statement did not reference the city's strained racial climate, the paucity of registered African American voters, or the Christian response to civil rights activism. Rather, the statement addressed a theological question: Did scripture justify Northern Presbyterian involvement in Hattiesburg? The white Presbyterian sessions asserted that the scriptures did not, and Hattiesburg newspaper editor Leonard Lowrey, a Presbyterian, declared the Northern Presbyterians "uninvited" and pronounced their presence unnecessary on theological grounds alone. Rayner wrote that their focus on theological questions enabled conservative Presbyterians "to oppose civil rights activism while they simultaneously defended the status quo."[958]

No doubt the resentment of segregationist Presbyterians was exacerbated by the fact that the Northern

[954] "Anti-Picketing Injunction Issued After Nine Ministers Arrested," *Hattiesburg American* (January 29, 1964); "60 Ministers Engage in Hattiesburg March," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (February 10, 1964): 1-2; 146 (March 23, 1964): 1-2; 146 (November 16, 1964): 3; James A. Gittings, "Clergymen Demonstrate in Hattiesburg, Mississippi," *Presbyterian Life* (February 15, 1964): 31; Rayner, 36-37.

[955] See Gerald A. Redforde, *Honoring the Past, Envisioning the Future: 150 Years at First Presbyterian Church, Decatur, Illinois* (Decatur: First Presbyterian Church, 2002): 43.

[956] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 40-41.

[957] "Meddling," *Hattiesburg American* (February 13, 1964).

[958] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," ii.

ministers were representatives of the UPUSA, a denomination of which conservatives in the PCUS were highly critical. The PCUS sessions were no doubt at pains to show that these visitors were not in any way connected with their denomination—something that local Methodists and Episcopalians could not do, as their communions had previously reunited across regional lines. Conservatives in the PCUS took pride that they preserved their distinctive witness in the Southern states.[959] There were white UPUSA congregations in Mississippi—as close as Meridian—but there is no record that these congregations or the Mississippi Presbytery of the UPUSA, gave support or sanction to the activities of the visiting ministers in Hattiesburg. (In 1967, Meridian's Central Church ended its federated status, and with consent of the U.S.A. Presbytery of Mississippi, it withdrew from that body, while maintaining its place in the PCUS Presbytery of Central Mississippi.)[960]

UPUSA ministers who came to Hattiesburg expected to be confronted on racist grounds by those opposed to the ministers' social and political beliefs. However, one such minister, the Rev. Doyle Michie, wrote in 2009, that the first question posed to him was, "I want to know how you stand on the Virgin Birth, "a theological debate from the early 1900s in the Presbytery of New York City of the former U.S.A. Church that PCUS conservatives had followed with great interest. Thus, as Rayner noted, "The question presented a new method of segregation defense. Hattiesburg Presbyterians challenged the visiting Northern ministers on the ground of their presumed liberal theology rather than on social or political grounds."[961]

Rayner argued that "singling out race as the only cause of their opposition discounts the influence of their strong conservative theological beliefs." Many in the PCUS held strongly to a certain interpretation of the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, arguing that the Church's sole mission was to preach the Gospel, eschewing all "political" questions. They argued that only as individuals came to faith would societal transformation occur, and that Christians were to work in the social and political spheres independently of their church connections. They insisted that the Church's involvement in social or political action diverted attention from its primary and only mission and therefore corrupted its message. Rayner asserted that the restriction of the mission of the Church nonetheless represented an intrinsically political and social statement. There were few, if any, exhortations from conservative Christians urging work in civic or other non-religious capacities for racial justice in their communities.[962]

Clyde Kenard Case Focused Civil Rights Interest in Hattiesburg

Prior to the arrival of the UPUSA ministers in Hattiesburg, Clyde Kennard, a Negro citizen of Forrest County, and a decorated veteran of World War II and the Korean War, requested admittance to Mississippi Southern College in Hattiesburg. After three years' residence in Chicago where he was one year short of earning a political science degree at the University of Chicago, he returned to Forrest County to assist his ailing stepfather on the family's farm just outside Hattiesburg. Unable to return to Illinois, and wishing to finish his degree, he decided to apply to all-white Mississippi Southern, as no college for African Americans was nearby. He took pains to state on his application that "he was no militant," even sending letters to the local newspaper, describing his efforts to enroll at the local college as pragmatic, logical, and not an integration crusade.

Opposition crystallized, nonetheless, and an agent of the State Sovereignty Commission was assigned to gather information about him. Pressure was applied to persuade him to withdraw his application. Soon afterward, he was arrested for reckless driving and the possession of five liquor bottles. Soon after, he was arrested and convicted of

[959] Episcopalians had ended their Civil War divisions in 1866, and Methodists in 1939. Southern Baptists now had congregations in all 50 states, leaving the PCUS as the only major religious organization organized along regional lines, namely, the 11 states of the Old Confederacy, plus Oklahoma and West Virginia, and the Border States of Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland. Adherence to segregationist policies among some PCUS congregations was cited by some as an impediment to PCUS reunion with the UPUSA.

[960] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 15, 1959): 25, 41; (October 20, 1967): 16-17.

[961] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 33.

[962] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 35.

stealing $25 worth of chicken feed and sentenced to seven years, the maximum possible penalty, at Parchman State Penitentiary. Judge Stanton Hall, who presided over the case and sentenced Kennard to this lengthy punishment, was a member of the city's First Presbyterian Church. Released on orders of Governor Barnett after developing cancer in 1962, Kennard died at the age of 36 in Chicago, July 4, 1963. Historians have brought forward Kennard's story to illustrate the failure of white Christians in Hattiesburg to see that segregation was discriminatory.[963]

Jussely and Stanway Opposed UPUSA Effort

The pastors of Hattiesburg's two older Presbyterian congregations, the Revs. William J. Stanway and Edward Jussely, were among the most conservative in the state. Although reared in different parts of the country, they shared similar views and worked cordially as colleagues over the years. Both were strongly opposed to what they deemed a Northern Presbyterian "invasion" of their community. This opposition was not restricted to activities sanctioned by the UPUSA. Both often expressed concern about growing liberal and activist currents within their own PCUS. The session of the First Church distributed a pamphlet entitled, *Holy Week and Civil Rights Demonstrations at the Churches*, by conservative leader, the Rev. Robert Strong, based on recent civil rights activities affecting his Trinity Presbyterian and other churches in Montgomery, Alabama.[964]

A Wisconsin native, Stanway was reared in the U.S.A. Church. But in 1936, he left home to attend Bob Jones University, a militantly fundamentalist and pro-segregationist institution, then located in Cleveland, Tennessee. Upon graduation in 1940, he attended Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, an institution formed after the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in 1929 and thus identified with the fundamentalist cause. However, the ideas put forward at Westminster were different in many ways from the theology at Bob Jones. Westminster was strictly dedicated to the concept of biblical inerrancy, but located in the suburbs of a Northern city, it was not focused on racial issues. Stanway was one of a number of Westminster graduates who came to Mississippi in the belief that the state's Presbyterians were receptive to the conservative theology their seminary espoused. Stanway's ministry followed the long pastorate of W. H. McIntosh, a minister equally dedicated to conservative theology, so that the First Church was recognized throughout the Synod of Mississippi as a citadel of conservative social and theological orthodoxy.[965]

Jussely was a Mississippian, but attended Maryville College in eastern Tennessee, an institution of the U.S.A. Church. He returned to Mississippi upon graduation where he taught before enlisting in the army in 1941. Upon his return, he entered Columbia Seminary and graduated in 1948. He served several pastorates in Southern locales before coming to Hattiesburg in 1959. Jussely's experiences in racial matters differed from some of his Presbyterian colleagues in the state. For example, his National Guard unit had been federalized during the Meredith crisis at the University of Mississippi, but unlike the Revs. Eade Anderson of Greenwood and William Flanagan of Byhalia, both of whom were critical of Mississippi's political leaders, Jussely felt a sense of alienation as his fellow Mississippians pelted the men with rocks and rotten food during the five-hour convoy to Oxford. Jussely had ridden in the fourth American army truck to enter Berlin at the end of World War II. As his sons later told Rayner, "In each instance, the United States government had called upon Jussely to defend democratic principles and promote freedom; however, the experience in Oxford hardened Jussely's opposition to further federal intervention and outside interference in Mississippi's racial affairs."[966] Jussely and Stanway followed the more traditional conservative viewpoints of PCUS ministers who espoused the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church. They argued that racial discrimination was not an important issue for Mississippi Presbyterians in January 1964;

[963] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 25-29; Timothy J. Minchin and John A. Salmond, "'The Saddest Story of the Whole Movement:' The Clyde Kennard Case and the Case for Racial Reconciliation in Mississippi, 1955-2007," *Journal of Mississippi History* 71 (Fall 2009): 191-234.

[964] Rayner, 43; Sean Michael Lucas, *Grace Transforms: A History of the First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi* (Hattiesburg: Tishomingo Tree Press, 2013): 39.

[965] Lucas, *Grace Transforms*, 33-39.

[966] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 48.

rather, they felt that the conservative principles of the PCUS were at stake. "Influenced by the growing strain of liberal theology within their own denomination, Stanway and Jussely took a stand to protect the Presbyterian Church from theological liberalism."[967]

Newton Cox was Moderate Presbyterian Voice in Hattiesburg

The Rev. Newton P. Cox was of a somewhat different mind. When he accepted a call to Hattiesburg's Westminster Presbyterian Church in 1960, Cox was told that his congregation differed somewhat from the two older white Presbyterian congregations in the city. He later explained that, "Those of us at Westminster were considered very progressive and almost liberal in our social attitudes." A native of Pennsylvania and educated at Wheaton College, a conservative Christian institution in the Chicago suburbs, Cox described himself as theologically conservative but socially liberal. He had discussions with some of the Northern ministers but did not then believe that protest and demonstration were appropriate for church leaders. He was married to the former Eleanor Richardson, daughter of the Rev. John R. Richardson, the longtime pastor of Atlanta's very conservative Westminster Presbyterian Church. Richardson (a native of Centreville, Mississippi) was himself known as a segregationist and theological conservative. Cox's theological education had been at Princeton Seminary and at Union Seminary in Virginia—both known for more moderate theological positions, as well as their more progressive stances on racial justice. According to Cox, Westminster was "a new church, a young church, and certainly open to gradual change." Yet, even the advocacy of "gradualist change" as espoused by Southern moderates, as Rayner has observed, "garnered one the liberal label." Thus, "Cox and his congregation's liberal views distinguished Westminster from the congregations of Bay Street and First Presbyterian, but . . . did not compel Cox's congregation to join or even support the demonstrating Northern Presbyterians."[968] The visiting UPUSA ministers found Cox "open to dialogue," and he held conversations with two Presbyterians from Illinois, the Rev. Jay Logan and later the Rev. Robert Beech. Cox stated that he sympathized with their motives but did not support their methods. In addition, he found that he had to restrict his relationship with these men to maintain the peace and unity of his own congregation. Conversations between the Northern ministers and the pastors at the First and Bay Street Churches were not reported.[969]

Conservative white Hattiesburg Presbyterians, when faced with protesting clergy in their community, cited conservative theological beliefs as their primary objection to civil rights protest. They did not believe that ministers should participate in public protests or engage in civil disobedience. They did not address the question of alleged discrimination against African Americans as they attempted to register to vote, believing that this was a political question, outside the Church's realm. As would be claimed subsequently, they argued that the Church had no role in political or social debates, and labeled the actions of the Northern minister, "a prostitution of the Church to political purposes." Mississippi conservatives were appalled when the 1965 PCUS Assembly endorsed a range of tactics used by civil rights activists, including sidewalk demonstrations, sit-ins, and other forms of peaceful civil disobedience. *The Presbyterian Journal* opined that willful breaking of the law, even for a worthy goal was wrong. The whole concept was offensive to a Presbyterian sense of personal moral rectitude and disciplined order. Hattiesburg elder Leonard Lowrey argued that "The church as an organization has no business taking part in political and sociological affairs." He pointed to scripture to show that it neither justified civil disobedience nor countenanced the Northern Presbyterian "invasion" of Hattiesburg.[970]

The white Mississippi critique of racial integration was also imbued with the belief that such efforts had their

[967] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 48-49.

[968] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 41-42.

[969] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 43.

[970] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 2, ii; see Dittmer, *Local People*, 219; "Assembly Endorses 'Civil Rights' Action," *Presbyterian Journal* 24 (May 12, 1965): 7; Leonard Lowrey, "The Church and Its Purpose," *Hattiesburg* American (February 22, 1964).

origin in Soviet Communist efforts to undermine the United States of America. As civil rights demonstrations gained momentum, segregationist leaders such as G. T. Gillespie and James O. Eastland, as well as writers for the White Citizens' Council, had skillfully transformed a regional anti-integrationist campaign into a national anti-Communist movement." Thus, "when northern Presbyterian ministers joined Hattiesburg African Americans in protest, they entered a Presbyterian community that linked racial equality with Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin."[971]

Railroad President and Presbyterian Elder L. E. Faulkner Opposed Demonstrations

An influential Hattiesburg Presbyterian who echoed the charge that Communist activity fomented racial discontent in the American South was L. E. Faulkner, president of the Mississippi Central Railroad, with interest in other local business enterprises. He served as a deacon and elder in the city's First Presbyterian Church for 37 years. An active letter-writer and pamphleteer, Faulkner was always alert for any hint of Marxist thought in his community, as well as within his denomination, the PCUS. He supported organizations such as the fiercely anti-communist Church League of America, based in Wheaton, Illinois, as well as the White Citizens' Council. He sought to counter organizations such as the NAACP and the Federal Council of Churches, and was vehemently opposed to any attempt to implement the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in Mississippi. Faulkner also acted as an informant for the Citizens' Council, reporting to its leadership on local discontent within Hattiesburg's Temple B'nai Israel with Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami, who had spoken out on behalf of racial justice. By contrast, Faulkner said of his pastor, the Rev. W. J. Stanway, that "we have a minister who speaks of the one and only plan of salvation," who refuses to mention "economic, political, social and racial questions which have no place" in the Church. Ben-Ami was dismissed by his congregation in the autumn of 1964, an act that occasioned national publicity.[972]

In his paper, *The Hattiesburg American*, editor Leonard Lowrey, an elder and Sunday school superintendent in the First Presbyterian Church, also condemned the presence of the visiting ministers, calling their efforts "ridiculous" and "misguided." He claimed they were "more interested in righting social and political wrongs, real or imagined, than in preaching the Gospel," and urged them to recognize "the folly of their action." During the period from mid-January to mid-February 1964, Lowrey's paper printed 40 articles about the voter registration demonstrations, and Lowrey wrote eight editorials directly questioning and criticizing the methods used by the visiting ministers.[973] Throughout the summer, *The Hattiesburg American* continued to disparage the legitimacy of the Civil Rights Act, the Freedom Summer efforts, and even the veracity of the deaths of the three missing civil rights workers in Neshoba County. Despite its generally critical stance, the paper was one of the few Mississippi newspapers that offered civil rights workers a forum to state their beliefs.[974]

[971] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 13. See Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (2nd ed., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press): 2000.

[972] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 14-16. See Drew Pearson, "Mississippi's Reward for Kindness," *Washington Post* (December 25, 1964).

[973] "Local Presbyterians State Their Position," *Hattiesburg American* (January 27, 1964). See "No Place for Ministers," *Hattiesburg American* (January 25, 1964).

[974] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 67. Cf. Susan M. Weill, "In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 1998): 272.

—photo courtesy of Sean Michael Lucas.

Leonard E. Faulkner edited the Hattiesburg American and was an elder in the city's First Presbyterian Church. He was a persistent critic of the Federal and World Councils of Churches.

Hattiesburg Presbyterians Travel to Illinois to Justify "South's Position"

The UPUSA ministers' work in Hattiesburg revolved around a Ministers' Project, which brought clergy from Northern locales to facilitate engagement between local African American leaders and moderate whites. Most of the city's white clergy and their congregations were hostile to the project. Since the majority of the visiting ministers were members of the UPUSA, these ministers and their denomination became the focus of criticism.

Not all in the UPUSA congregations from which pastors such as Emil Hattoon came were supportive of their actions. Although church records indicate that Hattoon's request to visit Mississippi on behalf of the civil rights effort had been carefully discussed and approved by his church's session, Northern critics, secular and religious, expressed disapproval of the tactic. Leonard Lowrey printed a letter to the editor from a Presbyterian residing in Decatur, Illinois, which referred to the ministers as "delinquents" and agreeing with Hattiesburg critics that the visiting ministers had no right to interfere outside their own community. Specifically addressing the participation of the two Decatur ministers—Hattoon, assistant pastor at the city's Westminster Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Robert Moore, a professor at Millikin College—the writer claimed there was widespread agreement in her congregation for her viewpoint.[975]

In the winter of 1964, Hattiesburg Presbyterians accepted an unusual invitation from the Presbytery of Mattoon in southern Illinois, to explain their reasons for objecting to the work of some of its ministers in their city. On February 21, Frank Montague Jr., a Hattiesburg attorney, received a request, forwarded to him by Henry Pyne, executive director of Hattiesburg's Chamber of Commerce, to participate in a meeting at the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston, Illinois, so that those attending could "hear the Hattiesburg, Mississippi story." The individual who sent the flyer promoting the event to Pyne had scribbled a note harshly criticizing the action of the Illinois ministers, calling them "rabble rousers," and stating that their involvement in Hattiesburg had caused "chaos" in their home congregations. Pyne told Montague that his participation in this meeting might serve as a way to end the voter demonstrations and return normalcy to downtown businesses.

Persuaded by Pyne and his pastor Newton Cox, Montague agreed to attend the event, with the specification

[975] Rosemary Leavitt, Letter to the Editor, *Hattiesburg American* (February 8, 1964); Rayner, 40.

that his participation would be strictly as a community representative, not as a commissioner from his church. He would address what he saw as the Northern ministers' "arrogant presumptiveness and disrespect for and disobedience of established civic authority."[976] Several other Hattiesburg segregationists seized this opportunity to present arguments to justify their position. Leonard Lowrey, the Presbyterian elder, had already taken the lead, advancing the PCUS doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in his editorials. He had written that, "we know of no Biblical warrant for ministers marching in picket lines." He thought that the visiting clergy were, "more interested in righting social and political wrongs, real or imagined, than in preaching the Gospel and saving sinners." He hoped his readers would pray that the "misguided" ministers would go home and pursue "a ministry centered around Christ and the Bible."[977]

Hattiesburg's PCUS ministers had been uneasy in the situation and had issued a statement dissociating themselves from the PCUSA visitors. They reminded Hattiesburg citizens that the picketing ministers belonged to a different denomination and emphasized the doctrinal reasons that Southern Presbyterians had traditionally advanced to oppose such work. They stated that civil rights activities were "out of accord with the doctrinal standards and the historic position of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. . . . According to. . . . the Word of God, and we do not believe that it is the calling of ministers of the Gospel to be engaged in such coercive political pressure movements."[978] Another Presbyterian writing in the local paper a few days later opined that, "Many God-fearing people are being given cause to wonder just what is happening to the Presbyterian Church in the North. What is the source of this sinister pattern of law defiance in the name of morality?"[979] Though the UPUSA Assembly had conferred its blessing upon the use of civil disobedience as a tool to assist disenfranchised persons in gaining their civil rights and a denominational agency had issued the call for help with the Hattiesburg campaign, there was widespread disagreement throughout the UPUSA with the Assembly's decision. Some in Hatties-burg no doubt sensed these reservations and agreed with them. The denomination was genuinely conflicted.

Eleven ministers from the Presbytery of Mattoon in southeastern Illinois had gone to Mississippi. Whereas the session of the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, Illinois, whose minister had joined the Hattiesburg picketers, had resolved that the congregation had a "moral obligation to stand [against] racial prejudice," the session of a congregation in nearby Homer, Illinois, had rejected the Assembly's approval of civil disobedience "one hundred percent." One Presbyterian from Illinois wrote a letter to *The Hattiesburg American*, declaring that, "This movement has split our churches. Never in the history of the Presbyterian Church has there been such chaos. I think it is safe to say that the majority of the members of the Presbyterian Church is [*sic*] opposed to taking part in racial demonstrations. We are ashamed of these rabble rousers. Our session went on record as being opposed to our pastor . . . taking part in these things."[980]

The elders of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Illinois had approved the Rev. Emil Hattoon's travel to participate in the Hattiesburg demonstrations by a vote of 19 to three, but a deacon in that congregation wired the Hattiesburg police chief to inform him that his minister—among those arrested during the demonstrations—did "not represent the Presbyterian membership of Decatur," and that he would "be obliged" if the police would keep his pastor in jail.[981]

From Ohio, a minister wrote to Hattiesburg's mayor, "I am ashamed and disappointed with, especially, the 31 clergymen connected with my denomination, United Presbyterians, and ask you and the law-abiding citizens of your fair town to forgive them and overlook their uncalled-for actions. Please be reassured that the above group, by no means, fully represents our particular denomination . . . [although] it does appear, for the time-being, that the more 'radical' elements do have control. Many of us feel that the South should take care of her own particular

[976] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 49-50. See "Attorney Sends Letter to Two Illinois Papers," *Hattiesburg American* (February 26, 1964).

[977] *Hattiesburg American* (January 25, 1964). See Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 192-98.

[978] *Hattiesburg American* (January 25, 1964); *Hattiesburg American* (January 27, 1964).

[979] *Hattiesburg American* (February 1, 1964).

[980] *Hattiesburg American* (February 22, 1964); Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 192-93.

[981] *Hattiesburg American* (February 4, 1964).

problems, as she has been doing quite well in this splendid, gracious, history-making epoch." One of the protesting Presbyterians who went to Hattiesburg invited an African American minister from Forrest County to come north and deliver a sermon in his congregation, but the Illinois church session objected, refusing to allow the African American minister to preach in their church.[982]

A month after Operation Hattiesburg began, the Presbytery of Mattoon hosted a meeting on February 23, 1964, to address Illinois Presbyterian concerns about their ministers' activity, offering "an account of your church in the civil rights struggle." Ministers who had traveled south would give accounts of their experiences. One minister member of the presbytery from Mattoon insisted that the presbytery consider allowing a written statement from Hattiesburg's local Presbyterian ministers as "it was well known that the sessions of the three Hattiesburg Presbyterian churches . . . had joined in a brief statement strongly and unanimously disavowing the actions of the visiting clergymen." The Illinois Presbyterians then invited the Hattiesburg Presbyterians to send a state-ment expressive of their views. No record has been found as to the way the formal invitation was communicated.[983]

The Mssissippi State Sovereignty Commission was at that time encouraging individuals and groups to travel throughout the country to explain the segregationist position, and several Hattiesburg Presbyterians were ready to state their case. The resulting confrontation in Charleston occasioned national interest and publicity.[984] Five PCUS representatives from Hattiesburg—three ministers and two elders—chose not simply to submit a written statement, but traveled to Charleston, Illinois to make a personal protest against the participation of ministers from that area in the Hattiesburg movement. They went as individuals, not as official representatives of the PCUS or their congregations. The five were Hattiesburg pastors, the Revs. William J. Stanway, of First Presbyterian Church, Edward Jussely, of the Bay Street Church, and Newton Cox, of Westminster Church. Along with elders Leonard Lowrey, editor of *The Hattiesburg American* and a member of the First Church, and Frank Montague, a member of Westminster Church, told the newspaper that they were going "to state the position of the Hattiesburg Presbyterian churches and what they believe to be the historical position of Presbyterianism—that the church as an organization has no business taking part in political and sociological affairs." They boarded the Illinois Central Railroad's famous streamliner *The Panama Limited*,[985] on Saturday evening, February 22, riding overnight to Mattoon.

In an editorial published that day, Lowrey stated that, "The [Hattiesburg Presbyterians] are going to Illinois to state the position of the Hattiesburg Presbyterian churches and what they believe to be the historical position of Presbyterianism—that the Church as an organization has no business taking part in political and sociological affairs." No mention was made as to opinions held by the members of the African American Preston Chapel Presbyterian congregation, and there was no indication that they had been consulted or invited to participate in the Illinois trip. Before traveling to Charleston, Stanway had also explained to his congregation that his actions were not influenced by a regional bias. He pointed out that he and Newton Cox were both Northerners by birth. Their action, he said, was motivated solely by theological conviction. On their arrival in Illinois, the Mississippians stayed in a Decatur hotel and attended the morning church service at the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston and addressed the special assembly, designated "Hattiesburg Day," that afternoon.[986]

The 2:00 o'clock meeting in the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston drew a crowd of 600 which, according to a reporter from *Presbyterian Life*, filled the balcony, choir loft, and an adjacent church parlor to overflowing. The Rev. Frank B. Diley, a professor at Milliken University (a UPUSA institution in Decatur), moderated the proceedings. The Rev. Robert Moore, a member of the Mattoon Presbytery and its first participant in the

[982] *Hattiesburg American* (February 15, 1964); Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 194.

[983] *Hattiesburg American* (February 22, 24, 1964).

[984] Joanna Moore, "Hattiesburg and Central Illinois," *Christian Century* (March 11, 1964): 340-41; Rayner, 50-54.

[985] This was an all-Pullman luxury streamliner, very expensive in its day. When, occasionally, Black persons turned up to ride, they had to stay closeted in their compartments, and if they visited the dining car, a special curtain was closed, so that they would not be seen by other diners. See Wilz, "When Jim Crow Rode the Rails," *Trains Magazine* 61:2 (February 2001): 42-45.

[986] "The Church and its Purpose," *Hattiesburg American* (February 22, 1964).

Hattiesburg efforts was the first to address the gathering. He described his and his fellow ministers' experiences there. Moore stated that social conditions in Hattiesburg necessitated ministers' participation to "corporately reveal God's grace in places of suffering and need, to resist the forces that tyrannize, and to support the forces that restore the dignity of all men [*sic*] as the children of God."

Speaking to the question whether participation in civil rights efforts fell within the Church's responsibility, Moore said that "in shepherding a Negro up the stairs of a courthouse we are as faithful to our ministry as in praying over the sick or dying. We must do both. . . . We came in Christian conscience to proclaim liberty to the captives, to open the prison doors for those who are bound and to follow our Lord and Master who did the same." He stated that he and his colleagues did not consider racial discrimination to be exclusively a Southern problem, nor did they come to judge the people of Hattiesburg. Moore ended his report by declaring that the work had been undertaken as the result of "a specific invitation," that is, from the NCC and UPUSA councils on race relations, and said of his and other UPUSA ministers' presence in Hattiesburg, "It is essential that we be there, and we shall continue."

The Hattiesburg visitors were invited to respond, with W. J. Stanway as spokesman. He read a prepared statement in which he agreed that the Church "does have its social implications," but he disagreed with the UPUSA ministers who came to Hattiesburg as to "how these implications . . . are to be implemented." He cited scripture, as well as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, to challenge the UPUSA ministers. He also quoted from the "Address by the General Assembly to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth," adopted in December 1861 at the organizational meeting of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States. He challenged the UPUSA ministers in three areas of their thought and action. First, he asked, "Where does the Bible promote protest and social disobedience as proper methods of ministry?"

Stanway said that there was no place in scripture that offered "any instance of our Lord's advocating civil disobedience." Stanway urged that since "Jesus recognized separate spheres of responsibility to God and to Caesar," the UPUSA ministers likewise should separate religious responsibility and political desires. He argued that the "provinces of Church and State are perfectly distinct" and that civil rights activity was not appropriate for the Church and its ministers. Second, he condemned what he termed the UPUSA ministers' "invasion" of Hattiesburg. Stanway said, "We find no justification in the Word of God nor in the Presbyterian standards for the invasion of our community by relays of ministers from various parts of the country intent upon participating in daily picket-lines at the Forrest County Court House." He called this activity "a prostitution of the Church to political purposes." Finally, Stanway questioned what he termed the visiting ministers' "action-first" methods."

Stanway said that Jesus never associated with the poor, "for the purpose of helping them to attain political rights and privileges, but for the purpose of bringing them to salvation." He concluded that the UPUSA ministers valued action over faith in God. He believed the affair highlighted the principal difference between Northern and Southern Presbyterians—their opposing definitions of the Church's role in society.[987]

Montague then spoke, insisting that Hattiesburg was working hard to solve its own problems, offering that gradual solutions were the best course. He asserted that racial discrimination no longer existed in the city, stating that, "No one has ever been kept away from the circuit clerk's office." He denied any discrimination at the voting registrar's office in Forrest County. He rejected claims that African Americans had suffered reprisals when they attempted to register. *The Christian Century*'s reporter noted that he changed the debate in this meeting of the Mattoon Presbytery from a theological to a political discussion—something the three PCUS ministers had claimed was outside the Church's purview. One of the Hattiesburg pastors was then quoted as saying, "We do not believe that it is our calling as ministers to be running hither and yon at the beck and call of professional agitators

[987] Doyle E. Michie, "Hattiesburg: Trial and Debate in an Illinois Church," *Presbyterian Life* (April 1, 1964): 27-28. In his article, Michie credited these words to Diley, but Rayner believed that the quote best represented the substance of Moore's address. Cf. Leonard Lowery, "The Hattiesburg Story is Told at Church Meeting in Illinois," *Hattiesburg American* (February 24, 1964); *Charleston Courier-News* (February 24, 1964); Harry Read, "Hattiesburg Clergy Rap Invasion," *Decatur Herald and Review* (February 23, 1964); *Christian Century* (March 11, 1964).

and demagogues or ambitious members of an ecclesiastical hierarchy meddling in problems which other people probably understand far better."[988]

One other Mississippian who had not traveled with the five PCUS visitors sought recognition. The Rev. John Cameron, an African American minister from Hattiesburg, rose from the audience, asking if he might speak. He wished to address discrepancies in the two presentations as to how African Americans in Hattiesburg were treated. The moderator ruled him out of order, stating that the white Presbyterians from Hattiesburg knew of Cameron's desire and had made his exclusion a condition of their coming. Then the moderator announced that he would adjourn the meeting, after which he invited Cameron to take the floor and address any persons who wished to remain.

Accounts in the local press indicated that most chose to do so. Cameron, pastor of Faith Baptist Church, an African American congregation in Hattiesburg, spoke concerning the vital contribution the presence of the Northern ministers made to the ongoing civil rights effort. In the face of threats and violence from opponents, he said, "The fear that pervaded our community before your ministers came is gradually abating, and only because you are *continuing* to come. We need you desperately."[989]

Evaluations of the meeting differed as to its significance. By most accounts, the white Hattiesburg visitors dominated the meeting, many of the minister-members of the Mattoon Presbytery having seemed reluctant to speak out. The Hattiesburg ministers told the Hattiesburg press upon their return that they felt "encouraged by the warm and attentive reception," believing that many in Illinois "agreed wholeheartedly, or at least in large measure, with [our] statement as to the proper mission of the Church." According to *The Hattiesburg American*, Stanway's words were greeted with "prolonged applause from the crowd and several hearty amens."

The Mississippians said it was obvious, that most ministers of the UPUSA gave the "social gospel" top priority, stating that, "It appears that little is being said in sermons or done in other activities to present Christ crucified as the only means of salvation for a sin-wracked world." As Rayner observed, the UPUSA ministers who visited Mississippi espoused a belief that corporate church action spread the good news of the gospel. By changing social conditions, they hoped to change hearts as well. They also knew that man, if not most, of the African American persons being denied the right to vote were active members of churches. They hoped that by allying with their cause, they could help change the hearts of white church members who were denying them the right to vote.

The three Hattiesburg ministers concluded that any action other than preaching—moral suasion—was inappropriate, inconsistent with historic PCUS theology and principle. But there is little evidence that they used their pulpits to address the plight of local African American citizens desiring the right to vote. *The Christian Century* asserted that Stanway's presentation gave no "recognition that racial injustice is a moral and a Christian problem rather than a civil or political one." It appeared that there were, in fact, differing views in both PCUS and UPUSA circles, as well as in the wider Christian community and the public at large, as to the appropriateness of the 11 ministers' activity in Hattiesburg. Many in rural southeastern Illinois, as in Mississippi, were uncomfortable with civil rights activism.[990] The Charleston session passed a resolution stating its moral obligation support of the General Assembly's position on racial justice and affirming the historic right of Presbyterian ministers to act according to dictates of conscience.

NCC Assumes Responsibility for Hattiesburg Effort

Presbyterians in Hattiesburg took further notice of civil rights activities as the National Council of Churches' Delta civil rights effort in the Magnolia State was expanded in May 1964 to include activities in Hattiesburg. The UPUSA had planned to end the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project in April, but efforts were made by some of the

[988] Moore, 340; *Presbyterian Life* (April 1, 1964): 26-29; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 196-97; Heuser, "Presbyterians and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 14.

[989] *Presbyterian Life* (April 1, 1964): 26-29; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 197.

[990] Rayner 352-61, *Christian Century* (March 11, 1964); *Hattiesburg American* (February 24, 1964).

workers to continue the effort under the auspices of the NCC. Although far from the Mississippi Delta, Hattiesburg became an important part of the Delta Ministry when the NCC agreed to take over sponsorship of the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project from the UPUSA. [991]

The NCC took over the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project in May 1964. NCC workers carried out voter registration, educational activities, community organization, as well as efforts to open channels of communication between African American and white leaders in Hattiesburg. With a median family income of $4,004, residents of Hattiesburg and Forrest County were not as poor as African Americans in the Delta. Still, 31% of Forrest County's African American families earned less than $3,000 a year; and according to the state Board of Health, malnutrition constituted "a major health problem" in the county. Only 12 of 7,406 African Americans of voting age had been registered in 1961.[992]

The NCC was able to play only a small role in Hattiesburg because a series of bombings in McComb, 60 miles east, led the NCC to send most of its Hattiesburg workers to assist with needs there. The presence of clergy helped focus national media attention on McComb, and thereby contributed to an atmosphere in which white moderates felt compelled and able to act.[993]

UPUSA Stated Clerk Visits Mississippi

In the summer of 1964, the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the UPUSA, flew to Mississippi on behalf of his church's efforts there. Speaking with news reporters, he called on "his fellow Presbyterian," Senator John C. Stennis,[994] to "join me in pleading with all Mississippians . . . to move forward together to become a responsible part of the free world and so strike a blow against communism."[995]

On June 10, 1964, a joint meeting of the officers in Bay Street Church adopted a resolution rejecting the PCUS Assembly's recent decision to continue financial support for the National Council of Churches, despite the NCC's encouragement and financial support for the work of visiting clergy in voter registration efforts in Hattiesburg. The resolution stated that Church involvement in "political and economic affairs" was unjustifiable and "incongruous with Presbyterian doctrine." The Bay Street leaders cited the *Confession of Faith* (Chapter XXXI, section iv), that churches "are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary."[996]

That summer, many more volunteers arrived in Hattiesburg as part of the Freedom Summer civil rights campaign, mostly white students from prestigious northern and eastern universities. The workers were assaulted by local whites wielding tire irons while canvassing for voter registration in an African American section of town. A photo of one of the wounded men, Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, was published across the nation.[997]

Rayner noted that the tone of white religious preaching changed in Hattiesburg following the June 21 murders of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had come to Meridian a month after the murders to speak at Chaney's home church. King's presence brought national attention to the slow-moving search for the three men. Their bodies were discovered about a week later. Still, the Hattiesburg Public Library, one block away across from the First Presbyterian Church, was closed, an action initially supported by Presbyterians who served on the library board. The closure of the library to all patrons was done to avoid integration.[998]

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[991] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 14, 50.

[992] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 46-47.

[993] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 55; 74; Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999): 270.

[994] Senator Stennis was a member of the Presbyterian Church in DeKalb, Mississippi and worshiped in the Central (PCUS) and later, the National Presbyterian Church when in Washington, D.C.

[995] *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (June 29, 1964): 10.

[996] Sessional records of the Bay Street Presbyterian Church (June 10, 1964), cited in Rayner, 62.

[997] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 63-66.

[998] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 75-81.

After the 1964 Civil Rights Act became law, Leonard Lowrey penned an editorial urging readers to abide by the law, even if they believed it to be unconstitutional, occasioning much criticism from the local White Citizens' Council. He invoked Christian principles as a guide for conduct in the civic arena. He wrote on August 8 that "Neither lawless acts from within nor the efforts of well-meaning groups and individuals from the outside will ever solve Mississippi's racial problems. Rather, the solution lies with Christian people of both races acting in the spirit of Christ, and under the principles of God." Though Lowrey blamed "visiting ministers and others" for inciting many of the town's problems and urged a gradual approach to change, he deplored the Neshoba County killings, condemned the burning of African American churches, and opposed all violence. As Rayner noted, Lowrey's Presbyterian faith "compelled the editor to write a moderate column, implicitly Christian, encouraging peace and understanding among the races." No sermons addressing the problems arising from segregation were delivered in Lowrey's church that summer (or previous to it). "Subsequently, Lowrey's commitment to segregation appeared congruous to his commitment to the Presbyterian faith."[999]

Hattiesburg's African American Preston Chapel Targeted in Civil Rights Struggle

White Hattiesburg Presbyterians worshiped in three congregations: the First Church, organized in 1883, the Bay Street Church, organized in 1903, and Westminster Church, a newer congregation, formed in 1954 to minister to newly settled areas in the western part of the city, as well as to students and faculty at Mississippi Southern College. A small Presbyterian congregation known as Preston Chapel, established under white auspices, ministered to African Americans. It held the status of a mission church and was dependent upon its white sponsors for financial assistance. Elder Emmett M. Herring and the Hattiesburg Negro Work Committee, of which he was chairman, were commended for their part in the erection of a house of worship for Preston Chapel. The presbytery maintained a scholarship for students attending Stillman College, although it noted that it had gone unused. The presbytery later made the down payment on a manse for Preston Chapel.[1000]

But in the opening months of 1965, as racial tensions grew, a recommendation that support from the Church Extension Committee for its 20 aid-receiving congregations or groups was approve, but not before a substitute motion was offered to exclude the monies earmarked to supplement the pastor's salary at Preston Chapel. Elder E. L. Caston of Liberty and the Rev. James G. Spencer of Crystal Springs asked that their votes in favor of the substitute motion be recorded.[1001]

Dahmer Murder Stunned Mississippians

On January 9, 1966, the firebomb murder of Vernon Dahmer, a Hattiesburg native, decorated war veteran, and president of the local NAACP chapter, stunned the city. Dahmer had the respect of many whites for his success as a local businessman. The attack on Dahmer and his family shifted local opinion to a more active condemnation of white terrorists and the Ku Klux Klan. Lowrey called the murderers "terrorists" and describe the crime as "revolting" and "cowardly." The city council and county Board of Supervisors issued a joint statement condemning the violence and requesting community support while law enforcement officers pursued those guilty of "this tragic and deplorable event." The local banks established funds for the Dahmer family. Three days after Dahmer's death, the local newspaper published an article advocating that African American persons be allowed to vote. Lowrey printed NAACP grievances as front-page news, as well as letters from civil rights advocates, and urged "mutual understanding and cooperation among the members of the two races."[1002]

On January 15, Lowrey wrote an editorial on the subject of racial peace. He said that "The best way this

[999] *Hattiesburg American* (July 21, 1964); Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 70.

[1000] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (February 19, 1963): 32; (April 21, 1964): 45; (January 19, 1965): 28.

[1001] *Hattiesburg American* (January 19, 1965): 27-28.

[1002] *Hattiesburg American* (January 11, 1966); Rayner, 66-67, 81-84.

can be accomplished is to follow the teachings of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian principles upon which our American heritage is based. We call upon all citizens of Hattiesburg and Forrest County to make this Sunday a day in which we pray for divine guidance individually and for those in leadership positions to keep our community free from further violence and to enable us to find the best answers to the questions that must be answered."[1003] While placing responsibility upon individuals—not calling for corporate involvement by the Church—Lowrey followed traditional Presbyterian teaching, but his action nonetheless opened a door for official recognition that a problem existed that Christians had to address.

Local ministers finally began to speak about the racial situation in their sermons. Stanway had delivered a sermon on the subject during the summer of 1965. In the sermon titled, "The Christian's Relationship to Society," Stanway had urged his congregation not to "completely isolate themselves from the world," but for each one to be "Christian in every area of his life . . . as a citizen of his community and country." He stated that, "I am against political action by the Christian Church or its agencies," but "I am for political action by Christian persons." The sermon, however careful in its phrasing, based on the text, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13), raised a new subject for local Presbyterians to consider.[1004]

When Dahmer's accused killers were brought to trial, James ("Jimmi") Finch, an elder in Bay Street Church, was the prosecutor. His assistant, Bill Wicht, was a member of First Presbyterian. The two acknowledged the possibility of economic ruin, social ostracism, and even physical harm. Finch received threats upon his life and family soon after he agreed to try the case. Finch's pastor, the Rev. Ed Jussely, showed public support during the trial with daily visits to Finch's office.[1005]

Freedom City Activists Visited Greenville Clergy

The National Council of Churches began a project in July 1966 called the Freedom City. It purchased 400 acres near Greenville for work with displaced African American field hands. The main goal for the Freedom City was economic self-sufficiency. This became the primary project for the Delta Ministry. This project failed because of financial setbacks and poor planning. The ministry exhausted its initial funds before construction of permanent housing started. Billie Rowland and Bruce Hilton, NCC workers, wrote that they visited nearly all of Greenville's white pastors. Only the Lutheran minister, who served a congregation of recent establishment that included a large number of Northern businessmen, was receptive to Rowland's inquiries. She wrote that "a few clergymen personally may feel sympathetic, but they all fear the wrath of their congregations were they to show any sign of cooperation with an agency of the National Council of Churches, which is widely regarded here as communist-inspired." Other accounts were given. The Rev. T. Robert Fulton, pastor of Greenville's First Presbyterian Church, claimed that the Delta Ministry staff had made no effort to enlist local citizens in their work.[1006]

The Delta Ministry was instrumental in pressuring counties that had resisted participation in the federal surplus commodities distribution program. (Although the foodstuffs were free, the counties did not wish to pay the handling costs involved.) Some 64,000 poor people received food. By the end of 1965, all but two of the state's counties agreed to some form of food distribution, with the result that more than 100,000 more poor people were fed. Still, in January 1966, when Delta Ministry leaders encouraged demonstrators to stage a "Freedom City live-in" at the deactivated Greenville Air Base, occupying the property until evicted, it seemed, at least to most Delta white citizens, that the program was radical and lawless.[1007]

Though many American Christians applauded the Delta Ministry most, if not all, Mississippi church leaders criticized it. As Dupont wrote, "In every respect the Delta Ministry represented a Christianity in opposition to

[1003] *Hattiesburg American* (January 15, 1966).
[1004] W. J. Stanway, "The Christian's Relationship to Society," May 30, 1965.
[1005] Rayner, "On Theological Grounds," 87-91.
[1006] *Delta Democrat-Times* (August 15, 1965).
[1007] "Incident in Mississippi," *Presbyterian Journal* 24 (March 9, 1966): 12-13.

the one [white] Mississippians espoused. Challenging all three elements of the state's [religious] orthodoxy, the Delta Ministry embraced a faith more social than evangelical, an economics that empowered workers rather than augmented capital, and a political ethic rooted in racial equality."[1008] Some NCC workers became dismissive of local pastors. Newman wrote that, "Some Delta Ministry staffers were so sure of the righteousness of their cause that they would brook no disagreement or compromise. Such staff members did not appreciate the pressures that Mississippi's white clergymen faced from their overwhelmingly segregationist parishioners."[1009] The ministry engaged in other, more controversial activities—for example, with NCC workers joining picket lines during a labor dispute at a Greenville carpet manufacturer. It also conducted voter registration drives, assuming many of the activities that had gone dormant since the withdrawal of SNCC and COFO from Mississippi.[1010]

Delta Ministry Supported Head Start Programs

Because the state government refused to receive federal funds designated to begin the early childhood educational programs known as Head Start, the Delta Ministry served as a channel for a one and a half million dollar grant to operate Head Start centers for young children. To place the money outside the veto of state officials, the funds were dispensed through Mary Holmes College, a predominately African American institution affiliated with the UPUSA in West Point.[1011] Mary Holmes College sponsored a new agency called Child Development Group of Mississippi to administer Head Start programs in the state. The Rev. D. I. Horn, president of Mary Holmes, accepted the arrangement after the acting president of Jackson's Tougaloo College, an institution affiliated with the United Church of Christ, refused. The program was plagued by problems, leading Senator Stennis to have it replaced. In the interim, services of the program to 12,000 children through 20 centers was suspended because of accounting irregularities. The Rev. David Ramage, a member of the UPUSA with the National Council of Churches, charged that Senator Stennis was the "real villain" in the interruption of funding for Head Start. Eventually, a compromise was reached. Mississippi businessman and church leader Owen Cooper, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, oversaw a new agency to administer the Head Start funds, and a Presbyterian, Leroy P. Percy Jr., of Greenville, served on the new agency's board.[1012]

Other Presbyterian churches assisted with Head Start programs. Head Start programs in Long Beach were conducted in the Presbyterian Church from 1964 to 1969. Alice Hudson Bell, principal of the Holly Springs Elementary School and an elder in the First Presbyterian Church, was instrumental in the organization of Marshall County's Head Start Program.[1013]

Major Shift Came with Voting Rights Act

The greatest assembly of white Mississippians reaffirming their pledge to fight integration and preserve states' rights took place on May 18, 1965, at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson. The rally, sponsored by the Citizens' Council, drew an audience of 7,000, with segregationist Alabama Governor George C. Wallace as keynote speaker. Governor Johnson chose not to participate, and Wallace was introduced by former Governor Ross Barnett. The

[1008] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 28.

[1009] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 87, 112, 114.

[1010] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 45.

[1011] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 40.

[1012] "Churchmen Oppose Suspension of Mississippi Program," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (October 24, 1966): 4; James F. Findlay, "The Mainline Churches and Head Start in Mississippi: Religious Activism in the Sixties," *Church History* 64 (June 1995): 237-50; Bruce Hilton, *The Delta Ministry* (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1969); James F. Findlay Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 40, 44 Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 285-89.

[1013] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 43, 96, 152; Mary Ellen Alexander, *Rosalie and Radishes: A History of Long Beach, Mississippi* (Gulfport: Dixie Press, 1980): 98; Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty* Rock, 460.

rally was held exactly 11 years after the Supreme Court's "Black Monday" 1954 school desegregation decision.[1014] The signing of the sweeping Voting Rights Act on August 6 enabled African American Mississippians to enter the body politic in numbers not seen since the period following the Civil War. Despite announcements by State Attorney General Joe Patterson that African Americans attempting registration to vote "could be arrested promptly," more and more lined up at courthouses for this purpose.[1015]

In June 1966, following his graduation from Ole Miss, James Meredith set out on his March Against Fear from Memphis to Jackson, only to be wounded by a sniper's bullet. His protest was then joined by more outspoken civil rights leaders. At Greenwood, Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee first used the expression "Black Power." Members of an anti-segregation organization of 120 PCUS leaders called A Fellowship of Concern provided PCUS support during James Meredith's Mississippi March of 1966 and contributed $5,000 to the Division of Christian Action of the Board of Christian Education for "specific endeavors in the area of racial reconciliation." (Significantly, no Mississippi names were listed in publicity surrounding the organization of the Fellowship of Concern.) During this period, there were boycotts of white-owned businesses in Port Gibson, Natchez, Canton, Edwards, Hattiesburg, and other cities.[1016]

Further controversy arose among Mississippi Presbyterians, as well as Presbyterians in other parts of the country in the summer of 1966, when civil rights workers affiliated with the Delta Ministry attempted to register voters in the Mississippi Delta.[1017] In June, due to lack of funds, NCC workers ended a Bolivar County voter registration drive that had added 2,000 African Americans to the county's rolls in just five weeks. NCC workers appealed to the organizers of James Meredith's march to Jackson to divert it through the Delta and add a voter registration drive to its agenda. Meredith was shot on June 6, the second day of the march. Leaders from SNCC, CORE, and the SCLC rushed to Mississippi to complete the march, which Meredith, after treatment in a hospital, rejoined at its conclusion. During the march, which ended on June 26, some 4,000 African American Mississippians registered to vote in counties through which the marchers passed. Two weeks later, the UPUSA Board of National Ministries issued a statement of support for the Delta Ministry. The ministry's focus would remain with the African American poor because it was "essential to the Church's witness to her Lord that she should move out to identification with the poor and the disposed in faithfulness to her original mandate and her continuing faith in Christ's presence with the outcast."[1018]

Since its "Statement on the Churches and Segregation" in 1952, the NCC had stood against segregation, maintaining that it was "diametrically opposed to what Christians believe about the worth of men." Using funds from the UPUSA, the Delta Ministry registered 5,000 voters in nine Mississippi counties in preparation for the May and June 1969 municipal elections.[1019]

Synod Investigates NCC Work in Mississippi

In spite of accomplishments, criticism of NCC projects and missteps continued without dimin-ution. In the summer of 1965, Methodist Bishop Edward Pendergrass told 2,000 white Methodists gathered in Jackson, "I'm just as opposed to the Delta Ministry as you are." Some 200 white Mississippi Methodist congregations cut off support to the NCC, and prominent leaders such as the Rt. Rev. John M. Allin, Episcopal bishop of Mississippi, were critical. As a commissioner to the 1965 PCUS Assembly, elder William F. Winter also argued that the NCC activities in Mississippi had "broken down channels of communication and understanding among our people."

[1014] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 283.

[1015] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 263.

[1016] Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 113; "Fellowship of Concern," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (January 6, 1964): 1-4; (January 27, 1964): 8; Marthame E. Sanders III, "'A Fellowship of Concern' and the Declining Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Presbyterian Church in the United States," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75 (Fall 1997): 179-195.

[1017] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 303-304.

[1018] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 118.

[1019] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 1, 1967): 109-11, 136-38; Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 154-55, 174, 201.

The First Presbyterian Church of Corinth overtured St. Andrew Presbytery, October 18, 1966, to ask that the PCUS withdraw from the NCC.[1020]

The objections raised to the Delta Ministry were complex. It was one of the first and most visible social action projects to be undertaken in the American Southand. It came at the very point of Southern defensiveness. The enfranchisement of African American voters was a great threat to the white power structure, although in Memphis, some 93,000 African American voters were registered and encouraged to participate in the political process. There longtime white political leader E. H. Crump, a native of Holly Springs, had encouraged African Americans to vote—though, of course, he had carefully shepherded the entire process to his and the advantage of his allies.[1021]

Mississippi leaders had taken an opposite tack, and while much of the Delta Ministry's work might be seen simply as a humanitarian concern—the alleviation of poverty and hunger—it also challenged white supremacy. By teaching illiterate persons to read and write, the availability of cheap labor might be made less available. Of course, the entire ministry, both as workers and recipients were concerned, took place in an atmosphere of inter-racial mixing and black-white social equality. It embarrassed and threatened white Mississippians to have the social, economic, and humanitarian disparities of their state exposed by outsiders, who challenged the standing order of their state at their sharpest points of vulnerability. Others felt this could not be avoided if the Church were to help those who were in such deep need. The General Assembly carried out an extensive evaluation of the NCC in 1966. This pointed to positive aspects, but also lodged criticisms. The PCUS continued to support the Delta Ministry, but with significant changes.[1022]

Some wanted even greater changes. On January 20, 1966, for example, Central Mississippi Presbytery overtured the General Assembly to appoint a committee to consider, as alternatives to NCC membership, the advisability of affiliating with other national and international ecumenical bodies such as the National Association of Evangelicals, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, the International Association for Reformed Faith and Action, the American Calvinistic Fellowship, and the American Council of Christian Churches—the latter a council formed by the Rev. Carl McIntire and the Bible Presbyterian Church for the express purpose of opposing the NCC.[1023]

Repeating a longstanding charge, *The Presbyterian Journal*, on March 9, 1966, labeled the Delta Ministry subversive and communistic. "Besides," said the editors, "The Church should engage in evangelism, not social work intent on overturning the status quo." Responding to criticism from this conservative source and also from liberal parts of the American religious establishment, the NCC decided in 1966 to undertake an evaluation of the Delta Ministry's entire program. That same year, the PCUS Assembly also authorized two separate investigations to determine what the denomination should do in regard to the Delta Ministry.[1024]

The critics of the NCC's work in Mississippi were emboldened. In 1967, at the annual meeting of the Synod of Mississippi, the Rev. Horace Villee, who chaired the Committee on Inter-Church Relations, which dealt with NCC matters, called attention to the following statements from an evaluation made by the NCC's General Board, namely that,, "The Delta Ministry was brought into being at a time when Mississippi was seething with racial hatred. . . . It has brought hope to the poor negro [*sic*] in Mississippi for whom the NAACP, the Church, the Federal Government and local governments had offered no hope. . . . It has kept the pressure on the Federal and State power establishments in such a way that they have had to act responsibly in the arena of civil rights, relief, and to a degree, in education. . . ."

Villee noted that church officials "did not miss the point that largely because of the Delta Ministry's work, it was now possible for white and negro [*sic*] subcommittee members to sit down at dinner at a public place in Mississippi with white and negro critics and discuss the most sensitive and central issues in the area of social, economic and political relationships. . . . It has ministered to a group (the very poor) with whom no one else has had a ministry. . . ."

[1020] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (October 18, 1966): 35, 37, 52. See Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 119.

[1021] William D. Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964).

[1022] "Delta Ministry Report," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (June 6, 1966): 14-15.

[1023] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 20, 1966): 44.

[1024] *Presbyterian Journal* 24 (March 9, 1966): 12-13; Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 118.

A representative of the PCUS Assembly had visited Freedom City. Villee stated that when these visits took place, he was not advised of or invited to participate, although at the time he was also the synod's moderator. He concluded that, "It appears that 'investigators' made little effort to uncover the truth of the charges made against the NCC project in Mississippi, for those in charge of the [Delta Ministry] could hardly be expected to admit any wrongdoing or responsibility for worsening race relations."[1025]

At its June 1967 sessions, the Synod of Mississippi recommended that the PCUS Board of Church Extension not grant any funds to the Delta Ministry. The synod's Committee on Church Extension, after meeting with NCC officials, recommended that the Assembly's Board of Church Extension not grant funds to the Delta Ministry on the ground that it was "not performing a proper church-related ministry," that it created "antagonism between Negroes and whites," and that it was absent any "primary emphasis on spiritual endeavor." It urged, instead, that the board allocate $25,000 through existing African American congregations around the state that would be designated as Presbyterian Service Centers. These would conduct evangelism, "training in responsible citizenship, literacy programs, day care centers, health and medical aid, relief and social welfare."[1026] Virtually no one in Mississippi—even among the state's racial moderates—supported the Delta Ministry. But in 1967, by a narrowly divided vote, the PCUS Assembly voted to endorse the Delta Ministry, becoming the last major denomination to vote support for the effort. William Winter again spoke against the Assembly's action. In August, the Board of Christian Education appropriated $25,000 for the ministry. It designated the contribution for the Freedom City operation and salaries.[1027]

Synod Council on Special Ministries Formed

In the autumn of 1967, a committee chaired by the Rev. W. J. Stanway of Hattiesburg proposed, and the Synod of Mississippi adopted plans for a kind of compromise ministry, approved by the Assembly, to be funded by special offerings and supervised by the Presbyterian Church to act as a channel for the distribution of clothing and food. Also included were Christian childcare centers, service to the aging, personal evangelism to groups not normally reached by the Church, vocational and family counseling, health and legal services. This was to be carried out in such a way that it would avoid "establishment of a work which will perpetuate the old segregated system," as well as "involvement in political movements or pressure methods," or "any attempt . . . to integrate any church against [the] will of the session." The ministry was to be carried on under the aegis of the Committee on Special Ministries to the People of Mississippi.[1028]

The PCUS Board of Christian Education agreed to fund a staff member for the Council on Special Ministries in Mississippi for three years and to supply matching funds up to $25,000 per year. It was agreed that the council would include at least three African Americans and provide the services the synod had suggested in its earlier proposal. The council was to consult with, not be an alternative to, the Delta Ministry.[1029]

The council began its work in the summer of 1968, focused primarily on traditional outreach programs such as adult evangelism, Bible study for children, handiwork, sewing, and cooking. These were carried on by Faith Church in Jackson, under the direction of the Rev. William H. Jones and students from Belhaven College, and in Sumner, under the direction of the Rev. C. Denton O'Dell, assisted by members of the church session there. Elders Ed Edens of Okolona and Erst Long of Ripley also gave service to the ministry. O'Dell's successor in the Sumner

[1025] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 1, 1967): 50-51.

[1026] Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 110-11.

[1027] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 125, 151, 153-55, 201; "Incident in Mississippi," *The Presbyterian Journal* 24 (March 9, 1966): 12-13; "Presbyterian Action Rapped by William Winter," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* (June 14, 1967).

[1028] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (October 31, 1967): 136-41 and (June 1, 1967): 110-11; "Mississippi Council is Authorized," *Presbyterian Outlook* 149 (November 20, 1967): 8-9.

[1029] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 155.

pastorate, the Rev. Robert J. Lake, conducted programs for African American children during the subsequent summer.[1030]

During this period, some congregations began withholding benevolences from General Assembly causes as a means of protest, directing the funds to other projects deemed more worthy. St. Andrew Presbytery published to its membership several paragraphs from the Synod's Stewardship report, which stated that, "We believe that every church, as a constituent of the General Assembly, should recognize its primary responsibility to see that the full amount of its apportioned share of the support of each cause represented in the General Assembly program, as well as each cause in the Synod or Presbytery work, be met before making gifts to any other cause outside the Presbyterian Church, U. S."[1031]

In 1970, the PCUS Board of National Ministries found it necessary to eliminate the Council on Special Ministries because of declines in giving for benevolences. The synod tried to maintain the program, but by 1971, it was realized these were ineffective to fund the operations. Few dollars came from the special offerings authorized by the synod to meet the proffered Assembly matching funds. Denominational monies were withdrawn after 1970. The synod tried to maintain the program and appealed to Mississippians for replacement funds, but the needed money did not appear. The synod ended the Council on Special Ministries in January 1971. Some special ministry projects continued under the auspices of congregations and presbyteries throughout the state as late as 1973.[1032]

Bill and Joan Young Worked for Poverty Relief in Tupelo

In 1967, a new couple started attending services at Tupelo's First Presbyterian Church. J. William and Joan Young had just moved to Tupelo from Louisville, Kentucky, to open a pet store. Like all newcomers in church, the Youngs' presence aroused natural curiosity. It turned out that Bill Young had left a job working for an antipoverty agency and was interested in doing something similar in Tupelo while the store was getting started. Not long afterward, the Youngs' phone rang at home. It was Keirsey McLean, wife of *Tupelo Journal* editor George McLean, who had met them at the church. She wanted to know if she and her husband might drop by one Sunday afternoon just to chat. "We were sort of honored, being invited by this older couple," Bill Young recalled in an interview. "They came and visited us in our home. We had a nice talk. . . ."

The Youngs learned later that the McLeans' visit was not purely social. But they passed the "McLean test," and a month or so later, J. William Young, a native of West Point, Mississippi, who had attended Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and served there for several years as a special assistant to its president, became the associate director of the antipoverty agency Lift, Inc., which McLean had established. For the next three years, Young and McLean worked with others from the community to coordinate an array of antipoverty programs that included Head Start and the Neighborhood Youth Corps—organizations that were considered by conservatives of all stripes, and segregationists, in particular, to be "subversive." McLean played a moderating role between state politicians and the federal government in this era, enabling the state to receive millions of dollars in federal aid—dollars that, as in the New Deal era, helped transform the region.[1033]

UPUSA Ministers Assisted Additional Mississippi Civil Rights Efforts

The UPUSA was the Delta Ministry's second largest contributor after the United Church of Christ. Following completion of its investigations, the UPUSA reaffirmed support for the Delta Ministry, donating an additional $10,000 to protect it. The UPUSA's regular contribution for 1966 was $60,000. This action of the UPUSA was

[1030] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (1970): 81; (1971): 64-66 and (1973): 18, 53, 54. See Alvis, *Religions and* Race, 119-20.

[1031] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (July 9, 1968): 21.

[1032] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 155.

[1033] Blade, *Tupelo Man*, 182-84.

regarded by many in the PCUS as unwarranted, and though the UPUSA had congregations in Mississippi, the UPUSA Presbytery of Mississippi registered its protest against funding of the Delta Ministry. Several UPUSA ministers participated in the Delta Ministry. The Rev. Don L. Register, a graduate of Chicago's McCormick Presbyterian Seminary, with a master's degree in social work from the University of Michigan, came to Mississippi from Chicago where he worked with a Presbyterian-sponsored community center.[1034]

Another UPUSA minister who served with the Delta Ministry was the Rev. Robert Beech, a native of St. Paul, Minnesota, and a graduate of McCormick Seminary. He had pastored churches in Hebron and Harvard, Illinois, and was induced to come to Mississippi, in part by the argument that the presence of clergy in civil rights efforts helped reduce the chances of violence and retaliation. His first work was in Greenwood, assisting with a COFO voter registration drive. He was arrested within two hours of his arrival as he passed out leaflets. He then served with the Hattiesburg Project, later working also with the McComb volunteers and at West Point, where he was chaplain at Mary Holmes College, working with the adult education program, and supporting the local civil rights movement. An approachable, easygoing person, he was effective in making contacts with the local white community, which became more receptive after the cessation of picketing. The project made little progress with ministers from other denominations it contacted. All the city's Protestant churches excluded African American worshipers by rule except Trinity Episcopal Church, which occasionally had Black worshipers. The Roman Catholic parish welcomed worshipers and visitors regardless of race. Beech also found Rabbi David Ben-Ami of Temple B'nai Israel, a transplanted New Yorker, open and supportive of the Ministers' Project efforts.[1035]

In September 1964, Beech brought his family to Hattiesburg where, after no one would rent a house to him, he bought a home in a white residential neighborhood. After living there for about a month, threatening phone calls began, and a cross was burned in their yard. Neighbors forbade their children to play with Beech's sons, a neighbor ceased inviting Beech's wife, Alice, for coffee after her husband insisted that she stop, and the Beech's younger boy was dismissed from a local kindergarten—all because the Beech's had hosted African American visitors in their home. Beech attended a white Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg on several occasions, when the pastor, "politely asked him please not to come there on a regular basis and to refrain from bringing his children to Sunday school." It was stewardship season, and "the minister thought that friendly Bob Beech would have a bad effect on receipts."[1036]

The Rev. Rims K. Barber joined the ministry as a volunteer in the summer of 1965. He had left his Presbyterian pastorate in Davenport, Iowa, to serve with civil rights workers in Canton, Mississippi, and was a minister-counselor during COFO's Summer Project in 1964. He became the Delta Ministry's coordinator for Madison County. He also carried on efforts for voter registration and other civil rights activities at Greenville and Yazoo City. Sensing the desperate need for educational improvement, Rims Barber organized a tutorial program with the help of volunteer African American teachers for children at Greenville's Freedom City. Many of the children involved had attended school either irregularly or not at all. Barber also compiled evidence of segregated education patterns to strengthen legal cases in favor of public school integration.

After the Delta Ministry was disbanded, Barber remained in Mississippi, working on behalf of various civil rights causes, as well as directing the Mississippi Project of the Children's Defense Fund. When that office closed in 1989, he began the Mississippi Human Services Agenda with his own resources. Acknowledging that significant changes had occurred in Mississippi, Barber noted that 500,000 African Americans in Mississippi remained in poverty, some still living in shotgun shacks in the Delta. Much remained to be done. With offices near the state capitol, Barber monitored and advised legislators, provided information for advocacy groups, and assisted African American educational and development programs.[1037]

Barber officiated at the state's first known legal inter-racial marriage. The ceremony was delayed two weeks

[1034] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 2.

[1035] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 42, 50-52, 64.

[1036] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 56; "A Costly Ministry," *Presbyterian Life* (March 1, 1969): 9; Lechtreck, *Southern White Minsters and the Civil Rights Movement*, 230.

[1037] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 157, 173, 207, 209.

when the conservative Southern National Party obtained a court injunction prohibiting the Hinds County circuit clerk from issuing the license, on the ground that both the state constitution and Mississippi laws prohibited "miscegenation" between a white person and a person with "at least one-eighth Negro blood." U S. District Judge Harold Cox overturned the injunction. The marriage was solemnized on August 17, 1970, in Jackson. After the 1983 reunion of the UPUSA and PCUS, Barber became a member of the PCUSA's Presbytery of Mississippi.[1038]

Some Felt Pangs of Conscience

Many church leaders felt pangs of conscience but were reluctant to embrace the work of an organization such as the Delta Ministry, portrayed as radical. The doctrine of the Church's Spirituality caused some Presbyterians to feel that even if change was needed, it was not part of the Church's duty, as the Church, to work on such matters. Bruce Hilton wrote that,

> This really began to come home to me during the visit of a Presbyterian pastor from Cleveland, Mississippi [likely the Rev. Lee M. Gentry, who was pastor of the Cleveland Church from 1962 to 1969]—one of the few white clergymen in the state who bothered to visit our projects. This pastor, whose colonial brick church and Christian education building are worth over a million dollars, is, by Mississippi standards, liberal. He is not afraid to use the phrase 'social action' in a sermon, or to follow up the admonition to love mankind with an occasional reminder that this means Negroes. But as we drove the back roads, seeing the Delta Ministry men at work, he repeated again and again his conviction, 'I'll admit much of this work needs to be done. But, Bruce, it is not the work of the Church.'[1039]

Gentry, who served on the synod's Campus Christian Life Committee, brought a recommendation to that body on October 20, 1966, regarding a ministry to African American colleges in the state, proposing employment of a full-time worker to serve with Negro churches and people, "not only for the purpose of presenting the Gospel but also as a link of communication between the races."[1040]

A large donation from Herbert McKinstry, a UPUSA lay leader and former NCC volunteer in Hattiesburg, kept the Delta Ministry's Citizen's Education Program afloat. It was responsible for helping many African American citizens register to vote. Meanwhile, the Rev. Carl McIntire, the ultra-conservative leader of the Bible Presbyterian denomination, peppered the state's PCUS ministers with issues of his *Christian Beacon* newspaper, depicting the Delta Ministry as a "Revolution in the Delta." He took ads in the national press that announced, "National Council of Churches to Invade Mississippi with Agrarian Reform Revolution," "The NCC Has Voted to Invade Mississippi," and "Your Church Money Might Be Used in Socializing America." The PCUS Assembly was in no mood to condemn the NCC, however. A special committee that reviewed the NCC's work with the Delta Ministry reported to the 1967 Assembly that it was positive about what it found and discovered no reason not to commend it for support. It noted "with shame for us and our denomination that the Presbyterian Church, U S. has been conspicuous in the paucity of its support for the Delta Ministry."[1041]

Ross Barnett attempted a political comeback in 1967, campaigning openly for segregationist support, but finished fourth in the state's Democratic gubernatorial primary. During the heat of the election campaign, Jackson's Temple Beth Israel was bombed by the Ku Klux Klan on September 18, and two months later, a dynamite blast blew out the front of the home of Jackson's outspoken anti-segregationist Rabbi Perry Nussbaum.[1042]

[1038] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 410; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 19, 1984): 7.

[1039] Hilton, 171-72.

[1040] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 20, 1966): 15.

[1041] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 151, Hilton, 164-65, Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 24-25; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1966): 37; (1967): 186.

[1042] Sparks, 239. See Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night, The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993); Bauman and Kalin, 230-57.

Covenant Life Curriculum Criticized for Discussions of Racial Justice

Renewed controversy arose among Mississippi Presbyterians, stirred by a new Sunday school curriculum that encouraged discussion of ethical issues before the Church. Presbyterianism had always encouraged an educated constituency and, in 1963, under the leadership of a planning team headed by the PSCE professor Rachel Henderlite, the PCUS Board of Christian Education introduced highly challenging and theologically sophisticated Church school materials known as the Covenant Life Curriculum. The new material, which placed strong emphasis on Christian ethics, was produced through the joint effort of five denominations: the PCUS, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in America, and the Moravian Church in America. The Rev. Charles E. S. Kraemer, president of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education and former pastor of the Leland Church, was executive director for the Covenant Life Curriculum.

These materials, which were prepared for use by all ages, from the youngest children to adult classes—sought to incorporate the insights of the "biblical theology" movement into laypeople's educational resources. The materials demanded careful preparation on the part of teachers as well as greater effort and consistent attendance by students. Teachers were asked to abandon the traditional lecture format in favor of discussion-oriented presentations. Less emphasis was placed on rote memorization or devotional sentiments with stress now placed upon the cultivation of critical analysis and theological insight. Scripture was used not simply for didactic or inspirational purposes, but to introduce questions and provide settings to foster reflection and critical thought upon the great questions of theology and contemporary life.[1043]

The new curriculum provided systematic instruction, such as the denomination had never had before. It focused on three areas: Bible, the Church (its history and doctrine), and the Christian life (particularly social ethics). Some were startled at the topics brought forward, but the response of the PCUS as a whole was gratifying. Instead of prescribing answers, the material posed open-ended questions, encouraging class members to think and discuss matters such as racial justice and church desegregation, applying biblical insights to current problems. Based on clear General Assembly statements, which had been in force for a decade and more, the material was forthright in its consideration of segregation and civil rights.

There was little support for the new curriculum among more conservative members of the Central Mississippi Presbytery, though *Presbyterian Journal* editor G. Aiken Taylor had been part of the writing team. Feeling that there had been little or no promotion or preparation for use of the Covenant Life Curriculum, the North Park Church overtured the synod on June 5, 1962, "to instruct its Executive Committee on Christian Education to take all necessary steps to insure that churches within the bounds of Central Mississippi Presbytery who so desire, receive the benefits which would normally be afforded by a presbytery Committee on Christian Education which promoted the Presbyterian educational program and literature." The elders foresaw "a possibility of our churches [that] use Presbyterian literature and desire a full Presbyterian program being cut off from help and counsel far more than has yet been the case." The following summer, the Rev. Park H. Moore, pastor of Trinity Church in Jackson, announced plans for two 12-hour workshops—one in Meridian and one in Jackson—to preview the material.[1044] Extensive preparations were made at the synod level for the introduction of the Covenant Life Curriculum, with workshops held jointly for the Synods of Mississippi and Louisiana on July 15, 1964, at Clinton, Louisiana, as well as six-hour workshops at Natchez, McComb, Hattiesburg, and Gulfport in the Presbytery of South Mississippi in the autumn months.[1045]

Once the Covenant Life Curriculum was introduced, it was heavily criticized. Conservatives were unhappy

[1043] See David C. Hester, "The Use of the Bible in Presbyterian Curricula, 1923-1985," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, eds., *The Pluralistic Vision: Presbyterians and Mainstream Protestant Education and Leadership* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992): 205-34.

[1044] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 18, 1963): 133.

[1045] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (April 21, 1964): 47-48.

with both the content and teaching methods put forward in the new material, so that *The Presbyterian Journal* charged that the new curriculum made "situational ethics" official for the PCUS.[1046]

Conservatives wanted strict instruction in the foundations of the faith, and some noted, in particular, that it aimed to challenge prevailing racial assumptions. Moreover, some asserted that it embraced a liberal theology: "Never once does [Covenant Life] say or imply that men are forever lost without Jesus Christ." Two Mississippi pastors, the Revs. A. H. Freundt Jr. and William J. Stanway, wrote alternative lessons.[1047]

The charges were not new, for in several Mississippi locales, the orthodoxy of denominational Sunday school materials had been suspect for many years. A few years earlier, the Meridian Presbytery had overtured the PCUS Assembly concerning "liberalism" in denominational publications. That effort's chief supporter was the Rev. W. J. Stanway, pastor of Hattiesburg's First Presbyterian Church and a graduate of Bob Jones University and Westminster Theological Seminary of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which educated ministers for the Orthodox Presbyterian denomination. Several congregations in the presbytery began to use materials from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The 1968 General Assembly confirmed its confidence in the Covenant Life Curriculum, "as theologically reformed, educationally sound, mentally stimulating, and morally challenging." It reminded the members of each session that in the selection of educational materials for their respective churches, "they act with responsible freedom under ordination vows as Presbyterian elders."

In many ways, Covenant Life, as it came to be called, represented a noble experiment, but in all but a few settings, its demands were too heavy for both students and teachers. This was true for a number of reasons in addition to the fact that some of the lessons introduced controversial themes. Most were unused to subject matter other than a Bible story, and the lessons in church history, theology, and ethics suggested an unwelcome voyage toward uncharted waters. Those who did not attend consistently were left behind, and too many teachers, accustomed to simply reading the lesson aloud from the quarterly with little advance thought or study, were not prepared to moderate the rather intense discussions the curriculum writers sought to provoke. Pressured also by financial considerations as attendance diminished (the beautifully produced study books were expensive), many believed that future Sunday school materials would represent something of an intellectual retreat. Dissatisfaction with various aspects of the CLC curriculum was subsequently listed as a reason that Mississippi congregations withdrew in the 1970s from the PCUS. Ironically, a new PCA congregation in Saltillo, Mississippi, was named the Covenant Life Presbyterian Church.

The PCA and Orthodox Presbyterians later joined forces to produce Christian Education materials, with the PCA using literature from the Orthodox Presbyterians' Great Commission Publications in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Rev. Joseph A. Pipa Jr., a graduate of Belhaven College and Reformed Seminary, who had earlier served as pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Tchula, Mississippi became editor of Great Commission Publications. Pipa, who held doubts that some in the PCA were thoroughly Calvinistic, later joined the Rev. Morton Smith from Reformed Seminary in establishing a new, even more conservative theological seminary in Greenville, South Carolina. During this period, many of those who used the CLC curriculum spoke of "Church school" instead of "Sunday school" maintaining that the effort to have a school of the Church should be emphasized instead of denominating the effort merely by the day on which the school was conducted.

[1046] See, for example, Marion A. Boggs, *What Does God Require—In Race Relations?* (Richmond: CLC Press, 1964). *Presbyterians in the* South, 3:463-64. Frank J. Smith, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America: The Continuing Church Movement* (Manassas, Va.: Reformed Educational Foundation, 1985): 19; See Mark A. Noll and Darryl G. Hart, "The Language(s) of Zion: Presbyterian Devotional Literature in the Twentieth Century," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, eds., *The Confessional Mosaic: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Theology, The Presbyterian Presence: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 187-207. See Clinton Owen Buck, "A History of the Covenant Life Curriculum," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1968).

[1047] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 216.

Reformed Seminary Organized

By some accounts, PCUS conservatives aligned with the Continuing Church Committee, had discussed plans for a new, conservative seminary as early as 1948. The early discussions had envisioned a location in Chattanooga. The idea had lain dormant as long as Columbia Seminary had been safely in conservative hands.

In the late 1950s, during the era when the Rev. R. McFerran Crowe was president, some dreamed of adding graduate theological education to the curriculum at Belhaven, but doctrinal differences among the various parties, as well as financial considerations made the idea untenable. There was also concern that the synod would not approve such a proposal, both for doctrinal reasons, as well as the financial commitment such an expansion would have called for.

Three area ministers, the Revs. A. H. Freundt Jr., Morton H. Smith, and John Reed Miller, met informally in June 1958 to discuss the need for a new seminary. They were joined the next year by the Rev. Jack B. Scott (pastor of Mt. Salus Church in Clinton), Professor J. Julius Scott of Belhaven, and R. G. Kennington (an elder in Jackson's First Church), to draft a proposal for a new seminary. The plan was held in abeyance while discussions with Columbia Seminary took place concerning its financial campaign. These discussions, however, laid the groundwork for the future organization of a new institution after Jackson's First Church determined that it could not support the Columbia financial appeal due to doctrinal differences.[1048]

Interest grew as conflict within the Synod of Mississippi increased. The chief concern, according to the seminary's first president, the Rev. Samuel C. Patterson, was for an institution that would propagate a strict view of scriptural inerrancy, that is the absolute absence of any kind of error in the original text, historical, geographic, scientific, or spiritual—a precondition, the founders believed, to any valid affirmation of biblical truth and authority for faith and life. Patterson had been especially concerned by the articles in *The Presbyterian Outlook* and had personally written to each seminary president, seeking reassurance concerning the orthodoxy of the various institutions. While cordial, their answers declaring that all professors upheld the doctrinal standards of the PCUS, left him unsatisfied.[1049]

The effort came a step further on June 13, 1963, on the campus of Southwestern at Memphis as the Synod of Mississippi was in session. The meeting was highly confidential and the group purposely small. The ministers attending were the Revs. John Reed Miller, William J. Stanway of Hattiesburg's First Church, Erskine L. Jackson of Kosciusko First Church, James G. Spencer of Crystal Springs, and Sam C. Patterson of French Camp. They met again the following month at the Robert E. Lee Hotel in Jackson, with the Rev. Leonard T. Van Horn from French Camp Academy added to the group. Knowing there would be opposition from the synod, the denominational seminaries, and other quarters of the PCUS, it was decided the new seminary would have to be "quietly planned and suddenly presented, small and humble in origin." It would be dedicated to the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible and to provision of ministers for small conservative churches, which had difficulty obtaining pastors from the denominational schools. Stanway, who later joined the seminary faculty as a professor of preaching, was a graduate of Westminster Seminary and urged that the new institution be patterned after his alma mater. Though located at some remove from Mississippi, Westminster was well-known because of the number of its graduates who had received calls from conservative churches in the state, as well as the earlier visits of J. Gresham Machen and Cornelius van Til in the 1930s, as well as interest that had surrounded their writings and ongoing controversies with the U.S.A. Church.[1050]

[1048] Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 263.

[1049] Rebecca Barnes Hobbs, *How Big is Your God? The Spiritual Legacy of Sam Patterson, Evangelist* (French Camp: RTSFCA Publishers, 2010): 185-88.

[1050] Lucas, *Grace Transforms*, 38-39. Machen, who was popular with conservative Mississippians because of his book, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) had sharply disagreed with his Princeton Seminary mentor, B. B. Warfield, over the matter of racial integration. A Southerner by ancestry and upbringing, Machen was born in Baltimore and had been reared in the PCUS Franklin Street Presbyterian Church, before later receiving ordination in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. when called to teach at Princeton Seminary. Warfield had, apparently alone among the faculty, argued for admission of Blacks to

Leadership for the effort toward a new seminary came largely, though not exclusively, from Jackson's First Church. The Jackson church was the state's largest and wealthiest PCUS congregation. Located in Mississippi's capital city, its members included many leaders in the fields of law, jurisprudence, industry, banking, and politics, including founders of the powerful White Citizens' Council. Elder Erskine W. Wells, who had been deeply involved in the session's attempt to influence Columbia Seminary to move in a more conservative direction, served on the seminary's board, as did elders Robert C. Cannada and R. G. Kennington. Two institutions closely aligned with Jackson's First Church (Belhaven College and later, Reformed Theological Seminary) sought, along with the church, to counter the influence of other PCUS colleges and seminaries, some of whose faculty and graduates—espousing racial integration and other liberal social positions, broader biblical theological interpretation, and other matters, had aroused anger and disruption in Presbyterian congregations across the state. The Jackson church donated the $50,000 it had originally offered to Columbia to the nascent seminary project. Much more financial support was to come in succeeding years.[1051]

The Rev. Samuel C. Patterson led French Camp Academy's resurgence, beginning in 1950, and was instrumental in the formation of Reformed Theological Seminary. He later broke with the seminary over theological issues and urged others to remain in the PCUS and PCUSA.

In the aftermath of the Mac Hart matter, it was clear that many Mississippi Presbyterians were concerned about what they saw as theological declension in the Synod of Mississippi, as well as undue advocacy for social change on the part of some ministers and professors at their synod supported seminary in Decatur, Georgia. The furor surrounding the admission of A. M. Hart into Central Mississippi Presbytery had shown that while certain presbyteries could deny liberal ministers admission, the synod as a whole was not subject to strict conservative control.

To remedy this situation, as well as to address the ongoing problem of the distances involved for students going to and from seminary (a situation that had existed since the closing of the theological department at Southwestern

the seminary; Machen, by his own account, had had a two-hour-long confrontation with Warfield about this, telling of the argument and stating his segregationist beliefs in two (now published) letters to his mother. The Machen-Warfield argument is discussed in Bradley J. Grundlach, "'Wicked Caste:' Biblical Authority, and Jim Crow," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 85 (Spring/Summer2007): 28-47 and James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2012): 253-55; see "Machen's *Private* Racism and Contemporary Public Segregationism," (January 13, 2022), https://heidelblog.net/2022/01/machens-private-racism/ Accessed 1.27.26.

[1051] Lucas, *Blessed Zion,* 129-31; Hobbs, *How Big is Your God?* 189-203; John R. Muether, *The First Forty Years, 1966-2006: The History of Reformed Theological Seminary* (Clinton, Miss.: Reformed Theological Seminary, 2006): 16-17, 21-23.

in 1917), a new educational institution was formally organized on Old School theological lines, December 20, 1963.[1052] That day, the trustees of French Camp Academy met and agreed to allow the Reformed Biblical Institute (as the seminary was originally named) to use its facilities and Bible Department personnel.

On Christmas Day, hundreds of flyers went out, announcing the birth of the Reformed Biblical Institute (later renamed Reformed Theological Institute). Basic in concept at first, studies were to include Reformed doctrine, as presented in the Westminster Standards; English Bible; and evangelism. The first sessions were night classes at French Camp. Other sessions were held in the Durant Presbyterian Church. Patterson said, "Our objective, as I see it, is not to initiate a head-on attack upon the liberal leadership and its institutions, but rather to offer to the people of our church an alternative to the present liberal leadership and education. . . . By holding institute sessions for college students and seminary students, we press our way into the very institutions that are hurting the vitality of the true evangelical faith we promote." Patterson believed that, "If these objectives are faithfully and sacrificially carried through, we may expect . . . a revival of true, evangelical, Reformed, mission-minded ministry." In line with the expectations of the Continuing Church Committee, he spoke of "the slow drawing together of folk of like mind, forming a larger instructed group to either operate as a minority party in the church, or in the expected event of actual dismissal or departure from the church of today, to form the basis of a continuing body of Presbyterian, fundamental believers." Because the institute was making use of synod-affiliated property at French Camp, the initial announcements stopped short of declaring that the new institution would be independent of denominational control.[1053]

New Seminary Lay Controlled

Several agendas were in play as the new seminary was organized. One was the concern of some prominent Mississippi lay leaders that the churches were overly influenced by the clergy.[1054] From the outset, it was decided that the new school would not invest power either in a strong president or faculty chairman, but that it would be directed by an executive committee composed entirely of laymen. "Our research showed that schools with strong presidents tended, over the years, to drift to that person's point of view," stated board member Robert C. Cannada, an elder in Jackson's First Church. Perhaps referring to differences with Columbia Seminary's J. McDowell Richards, he said, "We had seen formerly conservative schools become liberal in that way. We also decided that we would renew our professors' contracts yearly. In many cases, we saw that professors with tenure tended to run the seminaries and could teach whatever they wanted without fear of being fired." And because ministers were viewed as likely to be more liberal, the seminary's lay board was designed to protect against ministerial liberalism. This action perhaps reflected concerns such those expressed by the 14 laymen who spoke before Columbia Seminary's board of directors in 1956, who stated that it was not sufficient to say that the professors were all members in good standing of their presbyteries, The visitors said that the seminary's board should itself ascertain and maintain the orthodoxy of the seminary faculty. The self-perpetuating board of the new seminary would attempt to do what critics felt the synods and presbyteries of the PCUS had been unable or unwilling to do.

At its June 1964 sessions, the synod declared, "that the proposed Reformed Theological Institute of French Camp Mississippi is no part of and has no connection with the Synod of Mississippi or the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and that this Synod request the Board of Trustees of French Camp Academy to devote the

[1052] D.G. Hart and John Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishers, 2007): 235.

[1053] *How Big is Your God?* 203-05.

[1054] This was an allegation made for some time among conservatives, as witnessed by the title of a popular newspaper circulated in the UPUSA, *The Presbyterian Layman*, which defenders of Presbyterian polity said was based upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the Church's governing principles. While the minister is indeed normally the moderator of the session, care is taken to assure the parity of ministers and elders in the higher governing bodies. Moreover, Presbyterian polity does not separate ruling and teaching elders as clergy and laity, unlike the Episcopal Church, for example, where bishops, priests, and lay deputies sit as three distinct "orders" in the governing conventions of that communion.

facilities of French Camp Academy—including use of buildings and the services of salaried personnel—solely to the purposes specified in the charter of French Camp Academy." At their request, the names of 52 members of the meeting were recorded as voting against the resolution. An informal protest was filed, signed by 23 persons, largely from the ranks of those who had asked that their names be recorded in opposition to the synod's resolution. This action was doubtless one of the reasons for the nascent school's move to Jackson.[1055]

Though the new seminary was independent, its existence was tied to the PCUS through the membership of some of its professors in that body.[1056] At the July 19, 1964, sessions of St. Andrew Presbytery, Patterson presented an overture, which stated that:

> Whereas, the Holy Scriptures clearly teach the church to expect and be vigilant regarding the certain coming of apostasy in the church in the 'last days.'. . . .Whereas we of the Church today live farther from the First Advent of Christ and closer to the Second Advent, and the last days, than any other generation of Christians, and Whereas we are by Scripture led to believe that the latter day conflicts within the church will be a conflict between the Bible Truth and Apostasy, and Whereas, our church, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, has given evidence of serious departures from our historic position and convictions in the following areas:
>
> 1. Our Church has not demanded that its courts, institutions or ministers subscribe and maintain loyalty to the highest view of Scripture that the words of Christ, the Scriptures as a whole, the Standards of our church, and the historic position of our founding fathers will sustain, but on the contrary has permitted much lower views of Scriptural infallibility and inerrancy than these sources sustain and demand, as evidenced by the fact that no responsible court in the church has taken action regarding the refuting and deploring of the positions presented publicly by four ministers of our church who were associated with four seminaries of our church in articles written in an issue of *The Presbyterian Outlook*, December 1962, on the subject, "Do We Need an Infallible Bible?"
> 2. Our church, through the action of responsible courts, amended our Standards on the matter of Marriage and Divorce in such a manner as to seriously depart from the historic position of our church in these matters, and from the clear verbal, teachings of the Word of God, and in so doing places our church in the position of fostering and condoning adultery, and so in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose Words we have set aside.
> 3. Our church, through its recent General Assembly, approved an amendment to our Standards which seriously departs from the historic position of our church, its Standards, and its Bible, in presumptuously and erroneously opening the door to the eldership of our church to women, and thus will be leading astray into a scripturally forbidden relationship women of our church.
> 4. Our church by its apparently interminable relationship with the National Council of Christian Churches allies itself and its testimony to
>   b. [no item "a." was listed.] An inclusiveness in doctrine that gives evidence of a tolerance in this area that is forbidden by scripture.
>   c. An expressed intent of a united World Church, which due to the above statements will be ecumenical in the sense that Babel was.

[1055] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 2-4, 1964): 49-50; "New Seminary Started by Memphis-Miss. Group," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (May 25, 1964): 3-4; "Mississippi Synod Takes Dim View of New Institute," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (June 29, 1964): 4; "Mississippi Institute Projects its Plan," *Presbyterian Outlook* 146 (September 21, 1964): 3.

[1056] Since earliest times, seminaries of the PCUS were responsible to and controlled by the synod (or synods), and professors were responsible to their presbyteries as far as doctrinal soundness was concerned. In the UPUSA Church, seminaries were generally under the authority of the General Assembly.

d. A new and low view of sex, extra-marital relationships, and personal conduct in this area that will seriously and sinfully mislead all who are infected with it, but especially young people.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Presbytery of St. Andrew go on record as expressing serious concern regarding the possibility that the Presbyterian Church in the United States is in danger of approaching avenues of Apostasy, and be it further resolved that this resolution be communicated to the Synod of Mississippi.

Patterson's resolution succinctly stated the principal issues of conservative disagreement with prevailing trends in the PCUS, and though not stated it indicated the practical direction of the new seminary's teaching. The presbytery, however, voted to table the resolution.[1057]

These events in 1964 took place, among other things, against the background of debate over the General Assembly's ratification of an amendment banning segregated seating in the churches, as well as the Jackson church visit campaign and the struggle over integration in the Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis. Research by Sean Michael Lucas revealed that L. Nelson Bell repeatedly urged that the new seminary be moved from Mississippi to escape any association with segregation.[1058] However, the board did accept a financial gift for the library on the condition that Blacks would never use it. (In time, this proviso was repealed.)

The Rev. Morton H. Smith, a figure closely associated with support for segregation, then teaching at Westminster—accepted an invitation in the summer of 1964 to join the faculty as professor of theology. He was instrumental in the move to expand the educational plan to cast the school as a seminary and transfer it to Jackson. With the financial help of Horace Hull the conservative Memphis elder—then also helping with the establishment of a segregated Independent Presbyterian Church there—property was obtained along Clinton Boulevard just past the western city limits of Jackson. The seminary held its first classes there in the autumn of 1965.[1059]

Two years later, the synod censured those members of the PCUS under its jurisdiction who had proceeded with plans for the new school without securing the synod's approval and ordered all members of the PCUS under its jurisdiction "to cease from all plans and activities leading to the establishment of a new seminary until such were submitted to the synod and approved by it." It also reiterated its request to the trustees of French Camp Academy to withhold the use of all resources of the academy, including the buildings and services of salaried person, from the new school and directed the presbyteries under its care to require their member, "to devote themselves to their specific callings as approved by presbytery" until any plan for a new institution should be approved by the synod. The General Assembly, likewise, instructed its Permanent Judicial Commission to study the propriety of PCUS ministers serving on the faculty and advisory board of the seminary.[1060]

The new seminary differed from PCUS seminaries and others, not only in as it existed in opposition to the denominational program and emphasis, but in method of teaching as well, for it could fairly be said that at this time the PCUS seminaries were stressing creative thinking and critical analysis, whereas Reformed Seminary was established to assure technical theological competence, mastery of biblical data, and propagation of the faith as traditionally understood. The four PCUS schools emphasized the historical development of doctrine and sought to apply the insights of religion to contemporary issues in both the personal and public spheres, whereas Reformed Seminary's teaching adhered solely to the Westminster Standards as applied to individual belief and personal moral conduct. It sought to blend both an Old School defense of the faith and the warmth of personal evangelism.

The new seminary attracted hundreds of students—many, including professors, from beyond the narrow confines of the Southern Presbyterian Church. It soon became a center for a different type of Reformed ecumenical movement. The founding documents of the Reformed Theological Institute called for "preservation of, and

[1057] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (July 14, 1964): 14-15, 22.

[1058] Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour*, 233; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 265.

[1059] Hobbs, *How Big is Your God?* 207-12, 223-24; cf. D. G. Hart & John Muether *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism*, 235; Muether, *First Forty Years*, 1-20.

[1060] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (1966): 21.

the propagation of, the original Southern Presbyterian convictions in regard to the concept of the spiritual nature and mission of the church."

The seminary sought to bolster the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as taught by Princeton theologians Charles Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield and to emphasize with new vigor Presbyterianism's traditional Calvinistic creed, including doctrines of "absolute predestination" and unconditional election—particulars of that had, admittedly, been neglected by many since the 19th century. Faculty members were required to affirm the Thornwellian doctrine, "that God has ordained a form of church government presbyterial rather than congregational or episcopal," as well as his teaching that the Church, as an institution, "should not presume to enter into areas of activity where it has neither calling nor competence."

As part of its foundational commitments, the seminary received the *Westminster Confession of Faith—as originally adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1861* [*sic*]—that is, containing the revised chapter on civil government (drafted in the aftermath of much controversy as colonial Presbyterians disagreed over the propriety of the American Revolution), but without the also-controversial chapters on the Gospel and the Holy Spirit added in 1942, or the 1959 chapter that had liberalized the Church's policy on divorce.[1061]

But Sam Patterson declared that, "We do not intend to hang this work on a racial problem or any problem less important than the theological purpose which alone brought us into being." After the synod's order directing that its ministers devote themselves to their specific callings as approved by presbytery, Patterson resigned from French Camp in 1966 to devote himself full-time to Reformed Seminary, becoming its first president.[1062]

Though the synod expressed disapproval of the Reformed Theological Institute, Central Mississippi Presbytery, on request from the session of Mt. Salus Church in Clinton, expressed its welcome and approval for the fledgling institution on July 16, 1964. Reformed Seminary received generous gifts, including monies from R. G. Kennington, of Jackson's First Church, for whose wife a beautiful chapel was named.[1063]

The Rev. Jack B. Scott and the Mt. Salus Session Outline Disagreements with General Assembly

Disagreements between Presbyterian conservatives—both in the realms of doctrine and social policy—began to crystallize in the mid-1960s. Many disagreements had been held for years—fear of union with the so-called Northern Church, racial integration, the ordination of women, and so forth, but in the social ferment of the 1960s, other matters were rising to the fore. In particular, conservatives believed their capacity to restrain change in the PCUS Assembly and its presbyteries was coming to an end. This was a prime reason for the support Mississippi conservatives gave to the formation of a new seminary. They understood that most graduates of the denominational seminaries would be influenced by the teaching of the professors in the official schools—teaching they believed undermined a conservative approach to Presbyterian belief and action. The sharp conflict between young ministers from the denominational schools with local sessions during the church-seating controversies—conflicts during which a high proportion of the state's younger pastors had left their churches and moved out of state—had underscored the situation. But differing racial views were only one of a number of matters conservatives cited as reasons for their dissatisfaction with the General Assembly's recent position and actions.

In January 1965, the session of Clinton's Mt. Salus Presbyterian Church—a strongly conservative congregation served by the Rev. Jack B. Scott, who would soon become a professor in the newly forming Reformed Seminary—framed a lengthy communication to Central Mississippi Presbytery outlining its concerns with certain actions of the General Assembly. The congregation was a 1952 product of church extension efforts by the Central Mississippi Presbytery, which had sought to re-establish the long-dormant witness of Presbyterianism in a community located

[1061] Robert C. Cannada, *The Unique Governance of Reformed Theological Seminary* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 2001).

[1062] Hobbs, *How Big is Your God?* 226, 231-33.

[1063] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 16, 1964): 34; *Reformed Theological Seminary Catalogue*, 1973–1974 (Jackson, Miss.: Reformed Theological Seminary, 1973): 5-7.

in the western part of Hinds County where, between 1842 and 1850, the New School Presbyterian Church had sponsored the nascent Mississippi College, long since a Southern Baptist institution. The church took the name Mt. Salus after the original name given to the rapidly growing Clinton, Mississippi community. An earlier Mt. Salus pastor was the Rev. James M. Baird Jr., a noted conservative leader who would later become pastor of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church and serve as moderator of the 1984 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Jack Scott's conservative concerns were well-known. He had been among the students who had sent a letter critical of the doctrinal positions held by certain professors at Columbia Seminary to *Southern Presbyterian Journal* editor Henry B. Dendy, charging that, "We have been told many times this year that we are not to say the Bible is the Word of God but that it contains the Word of God. . . . What they mean is that we cannot accept the whole Scripture. . . . but must judge for ourselves just what is and is not the Word of God." Dendy had chosen not to print the letter, referring it to the seminary board for their response. Two years later, Scott, along with 11 other students, including Morton Smith, petitioned the Columbia Seminary board, sending to the directors a document entitled, "A Short History of Certain Events Taking Place at Columbia Theological Seminary." These actions had attracted the attention of the elders at Jackson's First Presbyterian Church, resulting in a 1956 inquiry into the doctrinal positions of the seminary by that body, including a decision to withhold funding from the seminary's 1960 Capital Funds Campaign—monies that eventually found their way to Reformed Seminary.

An Outline of Conservative Concerns

The Mt. Salus elders listed several objections—among them, the 1959 revision of the *Confession's* chapter on Divorce and Remarriage, as opposed to the teachings of Christ and "containing a procedure for [divorce] contrary to the explicit teaching and word of Christ." The elders objected to the PCUS 1961 *Brief Statement of Belief*, which they believed omitted "many fundamental parts" of the *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*. They also stated their objection to the ordination of women as deacons, elders, or ministers as contrary "to the entire biblical record of God's purpose for women in His Church." The session cited a study booklet called, *Come, Creator Spirit*, commended by the 1964 Assembly as containing "the heretical doctrine of universalism." The Clinton session criticized what they saw as the Assembly's refusal to examine *The Layman's Bible Commentary* to assure that it was in accord with the Church's Standards, along with its refusal to withdraw from the National Council of Churches, "in the face of recent pronouncements from that body in the areas of communism, sex, [and] racial agitation." The Assembly's participation in negotiations for reunion with the UPUSA came in for criticism, as well as in the Blake-Pike proposals for wider church union (the Consultation for Church Union). The Assembly's recommendation that church property not be used to house private schools and its "taking action to order local congregations to integrate regardless of the local situation that might obtain, thus attempting to usurp the authority vested in the local session," were other matters that drew critique.

Its recommendation that church property not be used to house private schools and its "taking action to order local congregations to integrate, regardless of the local situation that might obtain, thus attempting to usurp the authority vested in the local session," were other matters that drew critique. The Mt. Salus elders then took a significant step, voting to suspend all contributions to any General Assembly benevolence, "as long as the contributions of our Presbyterian Church, U. S., to the National Council of Churches continue to be made," or as long as the PCUS retained its membership in that organization.

A "Pseudo-Gospel Being Offered to the Negro Population of Our Land" Condemned

In language similar to that found in other conservative publications, including those issued by the Citizens' Council, the Mt. Salus elders also declared that,

> This Session will not recognize and states that it rejects and repudiates the recent above mentioned pronouncements on racial issues, denying the validity thereof and charging that they are patently unconstitutional and a flagrant attempt to usurp authority vested in presbyteries and sessions. The Session of Mt. Salus Presbyterian Church expresses its conviction that there is prevalent abroad today a pseudo-gospel which is being offered to the Negro population of our land, which pseudo-gospel offers them not salvation in Christ and a place in His Kingdom for eternity, but a much lesser place in the kingdom of men, which kingdom is already under condemnation of God to be destroyed in the last day. We further express our conviction that our Church in following the lead of secular courts and preaching social and economic reforms instead of offering to all men regardless of race, the only Gospel that can bring true happiness, is falling into the hands of a godless world whose prince is Satan.

The resolutions were signed by the Rev. Jack B. Scott and Frank C. Horton, clerk of session.[1064]

The ideas set forth with clarity and force by the Mt. Salus elders were related to the motives held by the founders of Reformed Seminary and would from time to time find further expression on the part of Mississippi's Presbyterian conservatives and others in the PCUS, including, some years later, a widely-circulated volume published by the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church on the eve of the division of the PCUS in 1973 by Reformed Seminary theology professor Morton Smith's *"How is the Gold Become Dim?" The Decline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as Reflected in Its Assembly Actions*.

The ideas put forward by Southern Presbyterian conservatives such as the session of Mt. Salus Church were reviewed in 2015 with the benefit of the passage of time and scholarly reflection by Sean Michael Lucas, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg and professor of Church History at Reformed Seminary, in his book, *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America*. More immediately, the Mt. Salus overture set down markers in the Central Mississippi Presbytery, the Synod of Mississippi, and the General Assembly as to matters that PCUS conservatives viewed as essential. In the complex social, political, and religious turmoil that roiled Mississippi and the nation, it would prove unlikely to religious conservatives that these matters could be dealt with as differing interpretations of the same faith.[1065]

Scott, who held a Ph.D. in Hebrew studies from Dropsie University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, taught Old Testament at Reformed Seminary until 1977, after which he served as an author for the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in America. From the 1960s to the 1990s, he penned weekly Sunday school lessons for *The Presbyterian Journal*, perhaps the most widely read part of the weekly magazine, as well as for *The Jackson Clarion-Ledger. The Presbyterian Journal* lessons, based on the uniform lesson plan, gave Scott an influential voice across the PCUS, and placed his lessons against those prepared by Union Seminary's liberal professor Ernest Trice Thompson and published by *The Presbyterian Outlook*.

PCUS Assembly Orders End to Segregated Presbyteries

Realignment of African American congregations from segregated presbyteries into the white presbyteries in whose territory they were located was one of several controversial actions emanating from the 1964 General Assembly and which occasioned opposition and delay among many white Presbyterians in Mississippi. Segregated ecclesiastical structures had kept ministers from the different races from sharing fellowship with each other, even when they were members of the same denomination. The segregated presbyteries embraced large areas, and all of the congregations were small. The segregated presbytery in which Mississippi's African American PCUS churches lay also covered the state of Louisiana.

[1064] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 21, 1965): 39-43.

[1065] Morton H. Smith, *How is Thy Gold Become Dim?*, *The Decline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as Reflected in its Assembly Actions* (published by the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church, Faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed Faith, 1973).

In an era when hotels, restaurants, and gas station restrooms were segregated, African American ministers not only had to travel long distances to provide spiritual oversight, find ministerial fellowship, and attend to church business, but they also found it difficult while traveling to find places to eat, sleep, and even use the restroom. Few establishments, especially in small towns, catered to the needs of African Americans. Poorly paid, the Black ministers had difficulty paying the expense of travel, as their congregations usually could not reimburse their expenses (as PCUS rules indicated should be done). Needless to say, African American Presbyterians found these arrangements trying.

Similar problems beset African American ministers in the white-controlled Methodist and Episcopal Churches. Most African Americans preferred the autonomy of all-black denominations, and the white-dominated communions had little success attracting and retaining African American members. By 1950, African Americans constituted only 1% of the PCUS. By isolating the Church's racial-ethnic constituency, its development and outreach was effectively limited.[1066]

Despite opposition, Mississippi Presbyterians moved somewhat more quickly to assimilate their segregated congregations into the former white-controlled organizational structure. In 1964, the Methodist Church had voted to end the Central Jurisdiction to which African American conferences had been confined as a condition imposed by segregationists when the merger between the Northern and Southern branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church was accomplished in 1939. Desegregation of the two Methodist conferences in Mississippi was not accomplished until 1973.[1067]

While Cumberland Presbyterians continued to worship in separate denominations aligned according to race, matters in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., followed an obstructionist course similar to that seen among the predominately white Methodist communion. Proposals had come before the 1949 PCUS Assembly to dissolve the small African American Snedecor Memorial Synod and to distribute its presbyteries among the white-controlled synods. Protests and delays followed—including some fears expressed by African Americans. The Snedecor Memorial Synod was, however, dissolved and its presbyteries distributed among the white-controlled synods in 1951.

"Is It True What They Say About Dixie?"

The Rev. Robert H. Walkup, a native of Jackson, Mississippi, and later pastor of the First Church in Starkville, then serving small churches in South Alabama, was with the Rev. T. Morton McMillan Sr., a commissioner from Mobile Presbytery to the General Assembly in 1949. He spoke in support of the resolution to dissolve the Snedecor Synod. His remarks were further developed into a sermon delivered in the Monroeville, Alabama, Presbyterian Church where the elder McMillan was pastor.

Walkup, called himself "a jukebox preacher" because he quoted popular songs in his sermons, began his supporting statement with the words of Al Jolson's (1946) "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?"

Is it true what they say about Dixie?
Does the sun really shine all the time?
Do the sweet magnolias blossom
at everybody's door?

[1066] *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:547; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 29; See Alvis, *Religion and* Race, 34-36; Darius L. Swann and James F. Reese, "Perspectives on the Development of the Black Presbyterian Church in the South," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Spring-Summer, 2007): 48-56.

[1067] Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 181-93; Reimers, *White Protestantism and the Negro*, 145-57; Gunn, "Religion in the Twentieth Century," in McLemore, *A History of Mississippi*, 2:484-85; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 292-320; Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 9; see Samuel S. Hill Jr., *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987); "Southern Baptists Survey Negro-White Cooperation," *Baptist Press* (October 18, 1968).

Do folks keep eating possum
till they can't eat no more?

From this, Walkup moved to some of the good things that were said about the South: the favorable climate, the good hunting and fishing, some delectable regional dishes, the strong sense of home and family and place, and the reputation for gentility and courtesy and hospitality.

Abruptly, he shifted to other, less pleasant things said about Dixie: to things said by Hubert Humphrey at the Democratic Convention in 1948, criticisms raised by Eleanor Roosevelt, or things written in *Time* and *Life Magazines*, or expressed in the statements of the Federal Council of Churches. He mentioned charges of racial discrimination, injustice, oppression, unfairness, and unkindness. Then, Walkup paused and asked, "Well, what about this? Is it true what they say about Dixie?" He paused again.

In a softer tone, he continued,

> Let me answer that by telling you of a recent experience of mine. I was back in Senatobia, Mississippi, where I did much of my growing up. One afternoon, I was coming out of the Post Office where I met a black man and his little boy walking up the sidewalk. The boy was eating an ice cream cone.
>
> Just as I got to them, a dog on the edge of the street began barking very loudly. The little boy was frightened by this and reached to grab his father's legs. In his confusion, however, he grabbed me instead and smeared his ice cream down one leg of my pants. In an instant, the man was down on his knees, whipping out his handkerchief, wiping the ice cream from my pants, and saying in an urgent, pleading tone: 'Cap'n, I'm so sorry he's gone and done this! I'll pay to have your pants cleaned! Please, Cap'n, I know he didn't mean to do it! You won't hurt him, will you, Cap'n? He's just a little bitty boy and all!'
>
> I looked into the faces of the boy and his father and saw fear in both of them. The little boy was afraid of the dog who had barked. And the father was afraid of what the white man would do to the little black boy who had dared to smear ice cream on his pants.

Walkup concluded by saying, "Now, brothers and sisters, as long as there is fear like that on a black father's face, it's true what they say about Dixie! God forgive us, it's true."[1068]

White Mississippi Presbyteries Resist Receiving African American Churches

In 1964, several overtures came before the General Assembly asking that the segregated, all-Black presbyteries in the PCUS from the former Snedecor Memorial Synod be dismantled and that the small congregations and their ministers be integrated into the white-controlled presbyteries within whose bounds they lay. The Assembly dissolved the African American presbyteries and instructed the corresponding white presbyteries to receive their churches within their bounds.

With its order that this be done, the Assembly issued a Call to Repentance and Expectancy in preparation for the reception of the African American churches into the formerly white-controlled presbyteries. This action was preceded by bitter debate. Opponents raised questions regarding the constitutionality of the Assembly's order on the ground that responsibility for reordering of presbyteries lay with synods, not with the General Assembly. However, the white-controlled presbyteries in Georgia and Florida moved forward and received the African American congregations in their bounds, but in 1966, the Assembly cited several Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina presbyteries for defying its directive. The Synod of Mississippi proved to be the most recalcitrant

[1068] T. Morton McMillan Jr., "Stories about Bob," in Jane Hines, ed., *The Bob Walkup Storybook* (Nashville: Hart Street Press, 1995): 90-92.

and was the last to incorporate the African American congregations into its presbyteries, with the Presbytery of Central Mississippi being the very last to comply.[1069]

Following the Assembly's instruction, given "with all Christian compassion and understanding," to presbyteries to receive African American ministers and churches from the former segregated presbyteries into the bounds of the 16 predominately white presbyteries in which they lay, Central Mississippi Presbytery on January 21, 1965, questioned whether the Assembly had authority to order a presbytery to receive a church without regard to the judgment and authority of the presbytery. It replied to the Assembly that, "Because of constitutional considerations and considerations of Christian prudence and presbyterial responsibility, we respectfully request to be excused from receiving into membership of the presbytery [from the former Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery] and under its care, any ministers of churches other than those whom, and which in the Christian judgment of the members of this presbytery, would assure and promote peace and harmony as we seek to minister to our area in preaching the gospel and building up Christ's Church." Several ministers, including the Revs. G. Roland Sims, Robert Lawrence, Julius W. Melton, and ruling elder J. H. Hendrix, Jr. of Jackson's Covenant Church, asked that their names be recorded as voting against adoption of this recommendation.[1070]

In the autumn of 1965, the Central Mississippi Presbytery had received a telegram signed by the Rev. Park H. Moore, and elder Henry S. Robinson, registering their protest "against prejudicial comments" by the Stated Clerk [W. A. Gamble] in the White Book (that is, the papers distributed to commissioners in advance of a presbytery meeting) concerning our General Assembly's Call to Repentance and Expectancy, implying that the Presbyterian Church has no responsibility for evangelizing non-Whites. Moore and Robinson said, "No court officer can speak for the whole until the matter is decided."[1071]

At the meeting of presbytery on October 21, 1965, for which the call papers had been issued, the presbytery voted both to defer hearing a report from its Special Committee on the Reception of Negro Ministers and Churches and to inform the General Assembly that it would not be planning a special program for presentation of "A Call to Repentance and Expectancy" in the churches of presbytery, as the Assembly had requested its presbyteries to do.[1072]

After the 1965 General Assembly's directive to incorporate the ministers and congregations of the former Snedecor Memorial Synod into the existing white-controlled presbyteries, the session of the Crystal Springs Church, arguing that "the colored churches in our synod have no presbytery now and need their own presbytery," and that "there is a great missionary field among the colored people of our state and these people cannot be reached under present conditions by people outside their race," asked that the Synod of Mississippi establish "within the bounds of the synod an additional presbytery for the colored Presbyterian Churches that were in the Presbytery of Mississippi-Louisiana." On recommendation of a committee chaired by the Rev. W. J. Stanway, pastor of the First Church in Hattiesburg, South Mississippi Presbytery answered the overture on October 19, 1965, in the negative because there was not "a sufficient number of Negro ministers serving Presbyterian churches within the bounds of the Synod of Mississippi to meet the constitutional requirements for the organization of a presbytery."[1073]

Central Mississippi Presbytery persisted in its majority opposition to receiving the three African American congregations and one minister within its bounds. On January 30, 1966, citing its belief "in the spiritual unity of all believers in Jesus Christ," it argued that "denominational and racial boundaries need not be erased in order for spiritual unity to prevail." It cited a statement in the preface to the Form of Government, that "In matters of the worship of God and the government of the church there are some circumstances common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by reason and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed," and asked, "What effect will its action in receiving a new church

[1069] Thompson, "Southern Presbyterians and the Race Problem," 23.
[1070] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 21, 1965): 33-34.
[1071] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 21, 1965): 18.
[1072] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 21, 1965): 23, 29.
[1073] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (October 19, 1965): 29, 37.

would have upon its work in local congregations?" Pointedly, it invoked the "spirit of Christian compassion and understanding," with which the Assembly had addressed its instruction.

In deciding not to follow the Assembly's instruction, Central Mississippi Presbytery concluded that church courts "should not disregard churches and their members already in a presbytery, who have legitimate desires and interests that cannot lightly be set aside." The presbytery argued further, that "To give preponderant consideration to the receiving of others would be to disregard the legitimate views and desires of those already in a presbytery. It seems to us that at this time to undertake what the Assembly requests would bring on for us problems in men's work, women's work, and youth work which would be tremendous and appalling beyond what some in our Assembly understand and would cause great loss to our present work and tragic disruption to the unity of our life and work in this area." At their request, the Revs. J. Moody McDill and Julius W. Melton were recorded as voting against the adoption of this report.[1074]

Three months later, some recognized that this action was untenable and could not be sustained. Thus, when the presbytery met on April 21, 1966, the Revs. A. H. Freundt Jr., Norman E. Harper, Erskine Jackson, Park H. Moore, and Morton H. Smith introduced a resolution into Central Mississippi Presbytery, calling for the reception of all ministers and the three small African American congregations of the former Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery, which lay within its bounds, with the Church Extension Committee authorized as an administrative commission to assist them in their transition. The resolution was remarkable, for these men had often opposed one another in the controversies that had polarized the presbytery. At the same meeting, the Women's Council of the Presbytery of Central Mississippi wrote to express its concern and feeling of responsibility "toward the Negro women within the bounds of this Presbytery who now have no affiliation with any Presbyterian group and have no opportunity for training."

The presbytery, however, took a different tack. It voted the following July to overture the synod to organize a presbytery for African American churches within the bounds of the synod. The Rev. Larry D. Kennon, pastor of Meridian's Trinity Presbyterian Church, protested the action on the ground that the body's action was "unscriptural and contrary to the wisdom and judgments of the General Assembly as set forth in the law of the Church."[1075]

On April 19, 1966, South Mississippi Presbytery heard a report from its *Ad Interim* Committee to Study the Future Status of African American Presbyterian Churches within the Bounds of South Mississippi Presbytery, chaired by the Revs. William J. Stanway, pastor of the First Church in Hattiesburg, with the Rev. James V. Johnson, pastor of the First Church in Laurel, and elder Frank W. Alexander of Long Beach. It called for the appointment of an administrative commission composed of the members of its Church Extension Committee, which would serve for one year, to receive and take oversight of the African American ministers and congregations within the presbytery's bounds. The congregations would not be immediately incorporated into the presbytery but would receive care from the presbytery during a period of transition and evaluation.

General Assembly Committee Appointed to Visit Mississippi

After hearing reports on conditions in the synod, the 1966 General Assembly, through its Permanent Judicial Commission, sustained the complaint contained in a minority report of the Synod of Mississippi that there were irregularities in the Central Mississippi Presbytery's examination of ministers. It urged the Central Mississippi Presbytery to "review carefully its procedures of examination to the end that future difficulties of this kind may be averted." The Assembly noted that "There seems to be apparent unrest and disorder in the life of the Synod of Mississippi . . . which has troubled many in the church." It empowered a committee of five, three of them former Assembly moderators, to visit Mississippi. They were the Rev. Charles L. King, chairman, the Revs. Marion A. Boggs, and W. John Millard, and elders T. M. Barnhardt and Edward D. Grant. King was pastor emeritus of the

[1074] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 20, 1966): 42-43; "Jackson Church Is Refused Admittance," *Presbyterian Outlook* 148 (September 26, 1966): 3.

[1075] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 21, 1966): 13-15; (July 21, 1966): 30.

First Presbyterian Church of Houston, Texas and one of the authors of the 1961 PCUS *Brief Statement of Belief*. The committee was created as a pastoral committee—to visit, inquire, and, where possible, to reconcile. It was not vested with judicial powers.[1076]

The General Assembly's committee, however, did not attend the 1966 meetings of the synod, which took place almost immediately after their appointment. They did, however, initiate conversations with various parties in Mississippi. For example, in correspondence with the Rev. James V. Johnson Jr., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Laurel and stated clerk of the synod, Charles King asked whether dialogue was being carried out among the differing parties in the three presbyteries. Johnson told King that he knew of no such dialogue in the South Mississippi Presbytery where he was a member. He indicated that the situation in St. Andrew Presbytery was the most favorable to those supportive of denominational programs. Johnson termed the situation in the Central Presbytery "extremely unfavorable" and reported that South Mississippi was "fairly evenly divided." He hoped the Assembly would extend the committee's time, so that it could carry out visits to the three Mississippi presbyteries in 1967. Johnson reported that a group of ministers who were supportive of the denomination and its program had met during the 1966 meetings of the synod to lay plans for visiting with the Assembly's committee to express their views.

A prime concern was the number of ministers who were leaving the state out of fear or frustration. At a later meeting, this group identified a number of "key" ministers who had left the state, whose views should nonetheless be solicited. They were the Revs. J. Eade Anderson, William S. Blanton, Athol D. Cloud, Richard T. Harbison, J. Whitner Kennedy, Sam B. Laine, Robert Lawrence, Spencer C. Murray, T. Russell Nunan, Charles L. Stanford, Robert H. Walkup, and Murphey C. Wilds. Two others, the Revs. J. Moody McDill and James A. Nisbit, now labored outside the bounds of their presbyteries though they were still members of Central and St. Andrew Presbyteries, respectively. The size of this list gave evidence of the number of progressive ministers who had either chosen or been forced to leave the state.[1077]

The segregation controversies affected not only established ministers, but also candidates for ordination. In the summer of 1965, John T. Ames Jr., a member of Hattiesburg's First Presbyterian Church and candidate under the care of South Mississippi Presbytery, was denied a letter of transfer to Washington City Presbytery (UPUSA), where he had received a call. His pastor, the Rev. William J. Stanway, had voiced objection to Ames's views that were critical of segregation and opposed his initial reception as a candidate. As a student at Union Seminary in Richmond, Ames had published an article in *The Presbyterian Outlook* supportive of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s August 1963 March on Washington. The Washington City Presbytery, understanding the situation, received and ordained Ames without the usual certificate of transfer from his former presbytery in Mississippi. Ames went on to earn a Ph.D. from Duke University and served the remainder of his ministry in Kentucky and along the eastern seaboard.[1078]

In a detailed report to the 1967 Assembly, the Mississippi Visitation Committee reported that on November 1-2, 1966, it spent two days in Jackson in conference with members of the synod. The committee invited one minister, "a leader of those desiring to follow the policies and programs of the Assembly, along with two other ministers and two elders, to spend a day with the committee describing the situation as they understood it." Then, "a leader of those unable to follow many of the programs and policies of the Assembly and unwilling to use much of the literature of the agencies, was asked to invite two other ministers and two ruling elders to join him in spending a day with the committee, setting out the situation in the synod as they understood it." The president of the trustees of Reformed Seminary was also invited to visit with the committee. A member of the committee attended both a called and a stated meeting of the Central Mississippi Presbytery.

The committee reported that "cooperation was wholehearted," the "spirit sincere and void of animosity." On November 3, several other persons who had requested interviews were also heard. On November 4, two members

[1076] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1966): 105-107.

[1077] See McAtee, *Transformed*, 186, 296.

[1078] John T. Ames Jr. to Milton Winter, May 27, 2016.

of the committee drove to Columbus for a luncheon with the Rev. Horace L. Villee, moderator of the Synod of Mississippi, and several laypersons, most of whom were from St. Andrew Presbytery. That meeting was reported to be of the same character as the earlier ones. "Dozens of people, several of whom were women" [*sic*] also submitted communications to the committee.

The committee reported the following as findings: First, that there was "prevalent in the Synod of Mississippi a strong anti-Assembly attitude." The committee found that, "Back of this attitude is the conviction on the part of many that the Assembly, in its policies and pronouncements and in the literature of certain of its agencies, has departed from the faith set out in its Standards." The committee quoted a paragraph from the catalogue of Reformed Theological Seminary, which they believed confirmed the existence of this conviction. The catalogue said, "As recently as the 1930s the theological position of American Presbyterianism in the South was generally uniform, and its witness entailed certain clearly defined emphases. 'Among these distinctives were the following: The inerrancy of the Bible, the pure Calvinism of the Westminster Standards: a *jure divino* view of Presbyterian polity, the Spirituality of the Church,' claiming that a "movement away from these 'distinctives' began around the year 1935." Increasingly, points of view have replaced the historic position of Presbyterianism in the South." The committee noted that it had not been given the task of reporting on the seminary, but said that it could not fail to observe that in both its Statement of Purpose and in the doctrinal subscription that professors were required to make contained the words, "as originally adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the United State [*sic*]." The reference, the visitors were told, was to the *Confession of Faith*, which was adopted in 1861. They noted as an aside that "This would seem to raise a question as to the relation of certain of the teachers [that is, those who were members of the PCUS] to the present *Confession of Faith*."

The committee continued, "This conviction that the Assembly has departed from its original Standards, which we have said was held by many in the Synod, has brought the holders of the conviction in direct conflict with those in the Synod who do not share their conviction, and desire to be loyal to the General Assembly and its present Standards and Programs." Noting that it had no way to determine the relative strength of the parties, the committee reported that it was in Central Mississippi Presbytery [that] "the conflict between the two divisions in the Synod [was] most acute," and that, "It is in this presbytery that the Reformed Seminary is located."

The visitors declared that, "The influence of the Seminary in the Presbytery is considerable. The Professor of Theology is a member of the Commission on the Minister and His Work, and also the Examiner in Theology of ministers seeking admission into the Presbytery." Then, referring perhaps to the earlier controversy over the admission of ministers from Westminster Seminary, as Reformed Seminary had as yet graduated few students, the visitors said, "The committee cannot avoid the judgment that the conflict in this Presbytery is in part due to the presence of a considerable number of ministers who have received training in theological seminaries outside the bounds of our denomination."

The Visitation Committee studied the records of the synod, and noted that, "A volume of considerable size would be required to record the complaints, the answers and the appeals that have come up to the Synod out of Central Mississippi Presbytery since 1962." It found in the reports of the Special Judicial Commission appointed by the synod to handle these complaints, "severe judgments concerning the spirit and procedures of Central Mississippi Presbytery." The visitors quoted from the synod's Special Judicial Commission's report to the 1963 meeting of the synod, where it found that, "There exists a spirit of contentiousness and personal bitterness within the Presbytery of Central Mississippi that is inconsistent with right relationships of Christian people and is prejudicial to peace and harmony within the Presbytery as evidenced by the testimony of the parties before this Commission."

The visitors reported to the Assembly that the synod had found "that this spirit has resulted in a state of schism and division within Central Mississippi which is seriously impairing the work of the Church through the Presbytery" [and] "that this spirit has further resulted in the employment of procedures in the Presbytery that are inconsistent with the spirit of governmental processes of the Presbyterian Church, U. S." The synod had concluded that punitive action "by this or any other court would only be a widening of the breach" and insisted that it had approached the whole matter, "with an attitude of seeking some beginning point of reconciliation between the parties, with a desire to try to create an atmosphere within the Presbytery in which all members could work

together for the good of the Church, and the glory of God." The Assembly visitors recorded that the Special Judicial Commission had admitted, however, that a year of hearings plus actions taken by the presbytery, "evidence that our approach was purely idealistic and fruitless—admittedly due in part to the human frailties of the Commission."

The Assembly's visitors found little evidence that the Central Mississippi Presbytery had heeded admonitions given by the synod's commission. They said, "A minister recently admitted to the Presbytery, reports to our Committee that his examination consumed five hours. He was finally admitted by the majority of four votes. A member of this Committee, listening to the examination of [another] minister seeking admission to the Presbytery, testifies that the examination in theology alone lasted two and one-half hours. Following a 45-minute debate over the motion to sustain the examinations, the minister was admitted by a small majority."

The visitors reported "numerous complaints" against Central Mississippi Presbytery's Commission on the Minister and His Work. So serious were the complaints that an invitation was given to the commission to meet with the visitors. "The principal complaint was that the Commission was refusing clearance to ministers whom Nominating Committees of pastorless churches desired to consider. Another complaint was that the Commission was unduly influenced in refusing clearance to ministers who had been active supporters of Church Union, or the National Council, or the Civil Rights movement. The Commission showed our sub-committee every courtesy; however, the conference was not altogether satisfactory."

With this as preface, the Visitation Committee recommended that, in accordance with provisions of *The Book of Church Order*, that the Synod of Mississippi be directed to meet and to take proper steps "toward determining that the examinations of ministers from other presbyteries seeking admission to Central Mississippi Presbytery are reasonable in length and in the nature of the questions asked, and that these examinations do not discredit either the ordination vows of the ministers seeking admission, or the integrity of the presbyteries from whence they come with valid letters of transfer." Committee chairman King warned, however, that "the Presbyterians of Mississippi will not be forced."[1079]

The Assembly also directed the synod to take steps "toward determining that Central Mississippi Presbytery's Commission on the Minister and His Work, in exercising its right to pass on the suitability of ministers for membership in the presbytery does not (1) deprive a congregation of its right to call a pastor of its own choice; and (2) [that it does not] Apply tests in determining suitability that have no constitutional basis."

The synod was directed to take steps toward correcting the practice in Central Mississippi Presbytery of refusing to elect as commissioners to the General Assembly "true and tried men whose views are different from those of a majority"—the same principle applying to members on presbytery and synod committees.[1080]

> The Assembly would require of the synod what in the final analysis can be determined only by the respective presbyteries acting in accord with the requirements of *The Book of Church Order* and in the light of the circumstances of a given case. . . .

The synod's actions indicated a belief that the Assembly directives had over-stepped proper bounds. Patterson said, "It certainly is not impossible for a great court like the General Assembly, under the pressure of time and to some degree, passions that are involved, especially regarding Mississippi, to take an action under those pressures which perhaps in retrospect even the General Assembly might recognize may go beyond the bounds of propriety in calling upon a synod to take an action that would set a precedent that perhaps the General Assembly itself would not really care to set."[1081]

The synod heard Dr. King as the Assembly's representative. He made a moving and heartfelt plea for reconciliation, subsequently published in *The Presbyterian Outlook*, saying, "I recognize that the Central Mississippi Presbytery, by contesting every point and by complaints and appeals can keep the present unhappy situation before the church for the next two or three years. . . . On the other hand, without changing a single theological view—who

[1079] "Assembly Directs Mississippi Actions," *Presbyterian Journal* 26 (June 21, 1967): 4.

[1080] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1967): 65-66, 146-50.

[1081] "Mississippi: 'We'll Stick by Constitution,'" *Presbyterian Journal* 26 (November 15, 1967): 5-6.

would be bold enough to ask you to do that?—without giving up a single Presbyterial right—who would want you to do that?—this Presbytery of Central Mississippi can make an answer to the synod and through the synod to the General Assembly that could cause thanksgiving throughout the whole denomination. . . . I say that it would have a healing effect throughout our church, and brethren, I believe it would do more for New Testament evangelism than any sermon that any man in this room could preach." King believed that future historians would pinpoint these meetings as the turning point in the Southern Church's history.[1082]

The synod transmitted to its three presbyteries, "the concern of the General Assembly that not only constitutional practices be adhered to, but that all reasonableness and Christian grace be shown." Patterson said, "I feel that we are doing all these things." The synod assured the Assembly, "of its desire to work out any difficulties arising in our midst in accord with the Word of God and the standards of our church."

On motion by Judge Leon F. Hendrick of Jackson's First Church, the synod deferred action on the Assembly's directive to deal with the Central Mississippi Presbytery's tardiness in receiving the three small African American churches within its bounds—both St. Andrew and South Mississippi Presbyteries having by then received the African American congregations and pastors within their bounds. The Rev. John T. N. Keels moved to instruct the presbytery to receive the ministers and churches, quoting biblical authority for the step, as well as provisions in *The Book of Church Order*. Ruling his motion out of order, the moderator put the Hendrick motion to defer action before the body, and it prevailed by a vote of 91 to 90. A complaint to the Assembly concerning all these matters was lodged by the Rev. Thomas H. McDill. He was joined by 35 other members of the body.[1083]

The Outlook devoted an entire issue to the synod's meeting—a rare action for coverage of deliberations of a church court in a modest corner of the PCUS, saying on November 20 that, "The synod meeting was considered a milestone in one regard, since it was thought that this brought about the first occasion when Negroes had been admitted to the property of the First Church in Jackson in any but subordinate relationships. The [African American] ministers who have been received by the other two presbyteries [as well as the Rev. William H. Jones, an African American whose churches in the Presbytery of Central Mississippi about the reception of which the synod deferred action] were present."[1084]

The Outlook's editors said that,

> It is not cynical to suggest that the action of the synod in response to the instructions of the General Assembly was what could have been predicted. There are those who believe that the leadership of the synod wants nothing less than the full force of Assembly power directed at it so as to seek to separate from the body of the church.
>
> There are others in the synod, particularly those whose background and traditions are in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., who yearn for the day when order is restored and the church in that state is once more in a close working relationship with the denomination. The increasing numbers of ministers who have been brought in from alien backgrounds where they were taught that Presbyterians, U. S., were suspect and were to be led out into a church that was sound have made the problem more difficult. Now, with the new seminary in Jackson, it is even more troublesome. . . .
>
> The deep concern of many people and the prompting of the General Assembly in its effort to deal with the situation grow out of an awareness that there are uncounted Mississippi Presbyterians who feel that the present leadership has cut them off from their church. . . .[1085]

[1082] Charles L. King, "A Plea to the Synod of Mississippi," *Presbyterian Outlook* 149 (November 20, 1967): 7-8.

[1083] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (October 31, 1967); "What the Synod of Mississippi Did," *Presbyterian Outlook* 149 (November 20, 1967): 4-7.

[1084] "Action Deferred on Negro Churches," *Presbyterian Outlook* 149 (November 20, 1967): 6.

[1085] "Assembly Demand Not Implemented," *Presbyterian Outlook* 149 (November 13, 1967): 3; "Next Step in Mississippi," *Presbyterian Outlook* 149 (November 20, 1967): 9.

In St. Andrew Presbytery, where sympathy for the work the Assembly's committee had been called to perform was strong, an overture offered on January 8, 1968, by the Revs. T. T. Williams and Henry C. Calhoun, was adopted, declaring that "The Presbytery of St. Andrew would like to express its deep appreciation to Dr. Charles L. King for his untiring efforts on behalf of the Synod of Mississippi before the General Assembly and for his gracious and Christ-like appeal to the Synod of Mississippi at its called meeting, October 31, 1967, to resolve its differences with the Assembly in mutual love and understanding. . . ."[1086]

St. Andrew Presbytery had received the four African American churches within its bounds in the spring of 1967, prior to the contentious synod meeting that October. The Rev. Sam Patterson of French Camp and later, the Rev. Leslie Tucker of Starkville chaired an *Ad Interim* Committee on the Negro Churches. Elder Will Lewis Sr., of Oxford visited all of the congregations, reporting that each church visited expressed the hope that an invitation would be extended for it to join the presbytery. On April 19, 1966, the committee had recommended that the presbytery receive the churches and ministers by means of an administrative commission. On motion by Elder Wesley R. Bailey of Tunica, action was taken to delay the matter. It was brought forward again at the summer meeting in Pontotoc in July 1966, where a motion to receive the churches was defeated by a vote of 43 to 35. Several ministers requested that their votes to receive the churches be recorded, including James W. Flanagan of Southaven, C. Denton O'Dell of Sumner, Clifford L. Rigby of Pontotoc, Frank L. Seaman of Sardis, E. Stanley Smathers of Oxford, J. P. F. Stevenson of Clarksdale, Thomas D. Walker of Aberdeen, Edwin R. Wilson of Corinth, and Lawrence A. Wood, of Booneville-Saltillo, as well as elder Russell Bryson of Tupelo.[1087]

The motion to receive the churches and ministers was finally approved in St. Andrew Presbytery, April 18, 1967, at its meeting in West Point, by a 42 to 41 vote, with the moderator, the Rev. J. Millen Looney of Baldwyn, casting the tie-breaking ballot. Four congregations with a combined membership of fewer than 100 members were involved. One minister, the Rev. Anthony S. Armstrong, was received by examination, and a single elder commissioner, Melvin Ford of Greenfield Church, near Waterford, was subsequently enrolled. A motion was made to invite a representative from one of the Negro churches to participate as an observer for orientation purposes on each permanent committee of the presbytery, then amended to include all committees except the Commission on the Minister.[1088]

UPUSA's Congregations in Mississippi

Four small congregations affiliated with the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. carried on their ministries in Mississippi. Bethany Church near Louisville was formed in the mid-19th century when the African American members of Bethsalem Church formed their own congregation, with a separate house of worship near the parent church but still under its care. In 1886, the Black members terminated their relationship with Bethsalem Church and were taken under the care of the African American Birmingham Presbytery of the U.S.A. Church. Two other small congregations near Louisville, Ethel and its near-neighbor called Stonewall, functioned under the same arrangement. Tiny Fairview Church near Byhalia, dated to the 1880s, was initially under the care of the PCUS; but at some point, in came under the care of the U.S.A. Church. In 1990, under the leadership of the Rev. Jonathan Kelley, the congregation united with nearby Bethel Church, forming one of the first interracial congregations among Presbyterians in the state. Trinity Presbyterian in West Point, which dated to as early as 1910, was closely associated with Mary Holmes College. It was also lodged under the care of Birmingham Presbytery of the U.S.A. Church. St. James Church, south of Louisville, was organized in 1957 as a new church development

[1086] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 16, 1968): 22.

[1087] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (July 12, 1966): 18-19.

[1088] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (April 19, 1966): 35; (January 17, 1967): 15; (April 18, 1967): 32-33 and (July 11, 1967): 18, 20-21, 23, 27; (January 16, 1968): 23-24

of Birmingham Presbytery. In 1965, Birmingham Presbytery was dissolved and its Mississippi congregations transferred to the formerly white-controlled Mississippi Presbytery of the UPUSA.[1089]

Further Conflict in the Synod of Mississippi

Following the synod's refusal to implement the General Assembly's instruction in regard to the Central Mississippi Presbytery, that body, too, reacted negatively to the Assembly's directives. At a called meeting, it received the Assembly's admonitions simply "as information," and voted down a motion from moderates that it declare its willingness "to receive and communicate with such visitors from the General Assembly as the Assembly sees fit and our willingness to prayerfully consider any advice which the General Assembly gives through its authorized servant." This motion received only 34 of 74 votes cast.[1090]

Conflict in the Synod of Mississippi continued to occupy much of the General Assembly's time. At its meeting at Montreat, June 6-11, 1968, Dr. King reported for the Mississippi Visitation Committee that his "pleadings" before the called meeting of the synod the previous October "were in vain." King's committee reported strong anti-Assembly sentiment, especially in Central Mississippi Presbytery, where conservatives such as the Rev. Morton Smith called the appointment of the Visitation Committee "an undue usurpation of authority by the General Assembly." King reported that various evasive actions were employed to delay concurrence with the Assembly's order.[1091]

King also observed that, "While there are many ministers and laymen and churches loyal to the Assembly and are trying under difficult circumstances to follow the policies and programs of the Assembly, the non-cooperative attitude on the part of others is still widespread. This division is one of the causes of the distressing unhappiness among the Presbyterians in the Synod. The division is evident in the election of officers and in the setting up of committees. The practices of the Presbytery of Central Mississippi, complained of in the report of this Committee to the 1967 Assembly are in no small measure contributing to the unhappiness and restlessness of the Presbyterians in the Synod. . . ."

The picture was not altogether dark. King gave as evidence, "the enthusiastic support of the synod's moderator and the stated clerk, both members of Central Mississippi Presbytery, plus that of more than one faculty member of the Reformed Seminary, to the effort to receive the Negro churches into the presbytery." The Assembly Committee did not agree with one premise in the synod response to the 1967 Assembly—that the findings of the Visitation Committee were "in a large measure a revival of allegations going back to 1962 and involve issues which have been handled and concluded." The committee believed that the Central Presbytery, "in exercising its rights reveals unfair, unpresbyterian, and unjust practices."

The committee called for appointment of "a strong pastoral committee, clothed with all the powers of persuasion and Christian love. . . to persuade the [Central Mississippi] Presbytery to correct the injustices charged by the Synod's Special Judicial Commission and the Assembly's *Ad Interim* [Visitation] Committee." It also called for "a careful study of the causes of the unhappiness, disunity, and hostility among the Presbyterians in the synod, with recommendations to the synod of measures for the improvement, if not the cure, of existing conditions."

The 1968 Assembly acted to continue the work of the Visitation Committee, taking note of the synod's action on June 3, three days prior to the convening of the Assembly, "to establish a committee, representative of its respective presbyteries, to meet the several presbyteries and to counsel with them as they seek the mind of Christ, to advise them concerning the recommendations of the General Assembly and to admonish them to seek the peace, harmony, and purity of the Church with faithful regard to Presbyterian order and procedure."[1092]

[1089] Graves, *Churches of St Andrew*, 41, 42, 84.

[1090] "Central Mississippi Presbytery 'Receives Information,'" *Presbyterian Outlook* 150 (February 12, 1968): 4.

[1091] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 3, 1968): 22, 27, 29, 36-37; Smith, *How Is the Gold Become Dim*?, 89, 91-92.

[1092] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1968): 85-86, 222-23; "Recommendations for the Mississippi Problem," *Presbyterian Outlook* 150 (June 3, 1968): 11.

Attitudes Gradually Changed

As time passed, some attitudes began to change. Preaching before the Synod of Mississippi at Belhaven College on May 30, 1967, on a much-discussed theme of the 1960s, "Making Christianity Relevant," the Rev. Horace L. Villee, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, had said, as he began, that it was sometimes charged that the contemporary church had given up too much in trying to reach the modern person. Granting that this was doubtless the case in some quarters, he quoted Professor W. Stanford Reid of McGill University in Montreal who had observed that "One of the primary reasons for the volume of writing of the so-called Neo-Orthodox theologians: Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Niebuhr, and others is that they seek to bring Christianity to man in a modern dress that he may understand its messages and accept its promises." Villee admitted that, "There is no denying that much of our modern preaching and witnessing does not reach modern man. Preachers often use words he cannot understand and concepts he does not grasp. Laymen dedicated to personal witnessing for Christ often do not know how to make the offer of the Gospel attractive to those they would win for Christ." He asked, "Is it possible that we have failed to relate new discoveries of this century to the Eternal Word? (Radio and TV, for example.)"

Villee believed that "Many of today's 'social reformers' have been rendering a needed service to the poor and the underprivileged; but alas! [They] have been guilty of not sitting where 'they' sat (Ezekiel 3:15) . . . and so, have not realized man's most important need—salvation from sin resulting from estrangement from God, and restoration to fellowship with God, resulting in real peace in the soul."

Villee believed the Delta Ministry was an example "of how well-meaning people have failed to 'sit where they sit'"—and so neglected others' basic needs. "Fighting for political righteousness, racial understanding and justice, for economic improvement of the condition of the poor, and for needed social reforms—all may be good and important," he said. "But when all may have been achieved, while the commands of Christ to preach the Gospel have been soft-pedaled or ignored, people remain trapped and condemned in sin, without a Saviour, and bound for hell. . . ."

Still, Villee pressed the members of the synod to answer, "Does anybody down the street in our neighborhood, or across the tracks in some run-down section, get the idea that CHURCH PEOPLE really care about them?" He pointed to Jesus' ministry to the poor and outcast, as "friend of both publicans and sinners," asking again, "Why aren't WE known as friends of ALL. White and Black, rich and poor, the learned and the unlearned? Surely, Jesus Christ is relevant enough and others will know this, when we sit where they sit, see life as thy see it, and demonstrate to them the loving concern of God for men's souls. . . ." He concluded that, "Of course, it isn't easy. . . . yet we follow One who bore a cross!"[1093]

Villee's sermon acknowledged that isolation from the Church resulted not only from racial segregation, but also from economic segregation as well, for Mississippi's white Presbyterian churches tended to be middle- and upper-class entities, leaving the poor as one of the most unchurched populations regardless of the racial group involved.

Further Attempts to Bring African American Congregations into Central Mississippi Presbytery

Soon afterward, a number of theologically conservative ministers in the Central Presbytery attempted to bring about the inclusion of the small African American congregations within the presbytery. Writing on January 18, 1968, the Revs. Richard A. Curnow of Louisville, A. H. Freundt Jr. of Reformed Seminary, Norman E. Harper of Belhaven College, Erskine L. Jackson of Kosciusko, Thomas G. Kay Jr. of Rolling Fork, Jack B. Scott of Reformed Seminary, Charles L. Skinner of Union, and Ronnie I. Willis of Forest urged that "All Christians have, through Christ, their access in one Spirit unto the Father, so that then there are no more strangers and sojourners but only fellow-citizens in the household of God (Ephesians 2:18-19)" and that "There are in our midst geographically both

[1093] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (May 30, 1967): 42-48.

Negro Presbyterian believers and Negroes who are without Christ to whom we are obligated by Christ and debtors to proclaim the gospel of Christ," and that "This work can only be done in a framework of love and compassion in Christ." The signers requested that the African American churches be received and that plans be made to admit the ministers, and that a study be made of ways "the Great Commission of Jesus Christ might be implemented so as to reach the unevangelized Negroes within the territory for which God has made us responsible."

But again, there was delay. The presbytery's Committee on Bills and Overtures stated that, "We share . . . a genuine concern for the evangelism of the Negro people. However, we do not share [the] conviction that our responsibility toward these people is best carried out by the reception of Negro congregations and pastors into our presbyteries. We sincerely believe that such action, at this time, would disrupt the harmony of both groups involved, in such a way as to destroy the effective witness of the Presbyterian Church in this area." The recommendation was adopted by a vote of 39 to 33. Several commissioners recorded their dissent. They were the Revs. Harold Bochert, R. A. Bodey (of Reformed Seminary), Norman E. Harper, Thomas H. McDill (of Columbia Seminary), Dwyn Milton Mounger, the presbytery's executive secretary for Church Extension, Jack B. Scott, G. Roland Sims (of Jackson's Central Church), Sefton B. Strickland (of Meridian's Central Church), and Robert W. Tabscott (of Jackson's Covenant Church), as well as elder John Hampton Stennis of Jackson's Fondren Church.[1094]

Efforts to receive the African American churches continued. On April 18, 1968, a resolution was submitted by the Presbyterian Ministerial Association of Meridian, signed by the Revs. Larry D. Kennon, David Shepperson Jr., Sefton B. Strickland, and Wilson Webb. It stated, "Whereas, our understanding of the Word of God; of the policies of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., of our own consciences; of the needs and desires of the Negro Presbyterian community within our geographical bounds; of the distressing state of unrest that exists in the world, the nation, and the Church; of the Scriptural call to be agents of reconciliation; constrains us to seek membership in our Presbytery for these fellow Presbyterian churches and ministers within the geographical boundaries of the Presbytery of Central Mississippi." The overture declared that "We cannot preach the Cross fully, unless we preach and witness in tangible ways that God is 'no respecter of persons' (Acts 10:34), and that Christ has broken down the barriers of enmity among his children."

The presbytery's Committee on Bills and Overtures, chaired by the Rev. Morton H. Smith, recommended that the presbytery reaffirm its earlier position (this represented a reversal of a position earlier taken by Smith), namely, the formation of a Negro Presbytery for the African American churches of Mississippi. Despite the urging of the Rev. Morris A. Taylor of Canton, who offered a minority report in support of their position, the overture presented by the Meridian ministers was answered in the negative. The presbytery, by a divided vote, sent an overture to the synod, calling for the erection of "a separate Negro presbytery" within its bounds.[1095]

At the June 1968 meeting of the Synod of Mississippi, it was reported that the Presbyteries of St. Andrew and South Mississippi had received the African American churches and pastors contiguous with their bounds but that the Presbytery of Central Mississippi had not so acted. The Rev. William H. Jones, pastor of Faith Church in Jackson, a new church development organized with the help of the PCUS Negro Work Program, had challenged readers of *The Presbyterian Survey* to hold the presbytery accountable: "It would seem to me and the 200-plus Negro Presbyterians within Central Mississippi that the General Assembly must make its position known. Either we are wanted, or we are not."

The synod ordered the Presbytery of Central Mississippi, "to meet tonight at the evening recess" and requested them to consider the reception of the Negro churches and ministers within the boundaries of that presbytery, and to report to the synod the next morning. The synod invoked scripture to buttress the request: "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35) and Isaiah 56:7 as quoted in Mark 11:17 by Jesus, "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." As ordered, the presbytery met, and on motion by the Rev. William F. Mansell of Vicksburg, the

[1094] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (January 18, 1968): 26-27, 34.

[1095] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 18, 1968): 6-7, 10; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 3, 1968): 22, 27, 29, 36-37.

three small churches were received, with a committee appointed to work with them. They were Faith in Jackson, Pilgrim Grove in Newton, and Alexander Memorial in Kosciusko. Four African American ministers were also received: The Revs. J. A. Carr of Kosciusko, W. J. Gipson of Jackson, M. A. Harper of Camden, and William H. Jones of Jackson. The Rev. W. A. Gamble, the presbytery's stated clerk, asked that his name be recorded as voting against the action. Gipson was the organizing pastor of Jackson's Faith Church, which he had served (1947-1962). Thus ended the sequence of defiance and delay that had occupied the energy of the Synod of Mississippi and its Central Mississippi Presbytery since 1964. The effort to keep the churches segregated had outlasted the federal Civil Rights Act and would continue to prevail in most places, by means obvious or covert, for a generation and more in Mississippi. Moreover, old alienations from the wider PCUS were not healed and would soon bear their bitter fruit as rivals went their separate ways in the Central Mississippi Presbytery itself. [1096]

Presbyterian Day Schools Organized as Courts Ordered Public School Desegregation

Although the Supreme Court's second *Brown* decision in 1955 had ordered desegregation of public schools, "with all deliberate speed," federal court orders for Mississippi schools were not issued until late 1964. These affected only a few districts—schools in Jackson, Biloxi, and Carthage. Further orders were handed down three years later. On May 27, 1968, the Supreme Court ruled out Freedom of Choice plans if other methods promised a speedier and more effective conversion to unitary non-racial school systems. The Justice Department announced it would seek court orders directing 159 school districts in nine Southern states, including 34 in Mississippi, to abandon Freedom of Choice plans for the 1968-1969 school term. Accordingly, Freedom of Choice plans earlier approved for 128 of Mississippi's 149 school districts gave way to orders requiring unitary integrated school systems as the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ordered immediate and full desegregation of all Mississippi schools. As a delaying tactic, some proposed that while racial integration be accepted, students should be segregated by sex. As Charles C. Bolton, a historian of Mississippi public education remarked, "Since [segregationist] whites believed that blacks favored integration primarily because miscegenation was their ultimate design, a program of sex segregation seemingly offered a way to stop the integration furor in its tracks."[1097]

The legislature also passed a tuition-grant act to assist students attending private schools, and though it was eventually declared unconstitutional, the act helped a few students avoid attending integrated schools in the mid-1960s. During this period, many school districts also supplied private schools with property: school furnishings and textbooks, even entire school buildings declared no longer necessary at little or no cost. By turning to private schools to educate their children, many whites used their wealth to obtain for their children what white supremacy had formerly done for whites through the public school system.[1098]

The Citizens' Council established private academies in and around Jackson. White persons in the local communities were expected to contribute to their needs whether they had children of school age or not. Virtually every community that had more African American students than white soon had an academy or day school operated under private, segregated auspices. The sudden shift to private education cut deeply into many congregational budgets.

Prior to the integration orders, the only private schools in Mississippi were church-related. Two of these were the Presbyterian Church's French Camp and Chamberlain-Hunt Academy. Episcopalians also operated All Saints, a small boarding school for girls at Vicksburg. A few in North Mississippi sent their children to the Presbyterian

[1096] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (June 3, 1968): 22-23; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 3-4, 1968): 27, 36-37; *Presbyterian Survey* 58 (June 1968): 37; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 17, 1985): 12.

[1097] Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005); cf. Jane Dailey, "Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after Brown," *Journal of American History* 91 (June 2004): 119-44.

[1098] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 245, Bolton, *Hardest Deal*, 105-07.

Day School of Second Church in Memphis or other prestigious private schools in that city. There were also several Roman Catholic parochial schools scattered around the state.

Approximately 10% percent of white Mississippi families abandoned public schools after 1970, though the instances of white flight were uneven. In the Delta counties and the city of Jackson, the numbers were much higher than in other parts of the state. By 1971-1972, nearly 40,000 students were enrolled in the new segregation-based institutions. But in the fall of 1965, the Catholic bishop had announced that all parochial schools would admit African American students. The trustees of Methodist Millsaps College also voted to enroll African Americans and admitted one student, but the trustees of Mississippi College, affiliated with the white-controlled Mississippi Baptist Convention, announced they would not enroll African Americans and would reject all future federal funds. The dean of St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral in Jackson, the Very Rev. John Stone Jenkins, vowed that St. Andrew's Episcopal School, operated under the cathedral's authority in North Jackson, would not operate as a segregated entity. In 1970, following federal court orders to desegregate Jackson's public schools, St. Andrew's Cathedral School was flooded with applications for admission. In spite of intense pressure, it refused to increase the number of admissions or to add a high school. Schools where similar stands were not taken stood out by contrast.[1099]

In Atlanta, as in Jackson, many whites turned to private schools as the prospect of federal court desegregation orders appeared on the horizon. Two Presbyterian schools in Atlanta received applications from African American students but confessed that they had not admitted any. In April 1963, the school at Trinity Presbyterian enrolled the daughters of African American civil rights leader Andrew Young, the future mayor of Atlanta. But the city's Westminster Presbyterian School, meanwhile, continued to bar African American students.[1100]

Some Mississippians tried to preserve white support for the state's public schools. In 1965, Durant Mayor C. H. Blanton, an elder in the local Presbyterian Church, urged white parents to continue enrolling their children in the local public schools, but of 165 white children scheduled to attend, only five appeared on the opening day of classes. For his stand, Blanton received hate mail from the Ku Klux Klan, which burned a cross in front of his home and torched his dry-cleaning business.[1101]

Mississippi's Presbyterians found themselves on both sides of the issue. For example, many of the de-segregation orders were implemented by federal district judge William C. Keady, an elder in Greenville's First Presbyterian Church. Attorney Robert C. Cannada, an elder in Jackson's First Church, represented the Hinds County School District as it resisted the integration mandates.[1102]

Presbyterian Teachers Taught During Transition to Integrated Schools

Hundreds of Mississippi Presbyterians were involved in the work of public education, and while some white teachers chose to move their service to private schools, many remained with the public schools and gave valuable assistance, smoothing the transition to integrated school settings. African American Presbyterian teachers also contributed, some working in challenging settings in the formerly all-white schools, where their presence was not always greeted with approbation.

Fonta Woodson O'Dell of Holly Springs, clerk of session in the local Presbyterian Church, was one such white teacher. She taught English and drove a school bus at Holly Springs High School. As the local newspaper paid tribute, "Her work has carried her through the difficult period of desegregation, and she has maintained the admiration and love of nearly every student with which she has been associated. She has the respect of thousands

[1099] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 308-09, 319, 322; Wise, *The Cathedral Church of St. Andrew*, 202.

[1100] Kevin M. Kruse, "The Fight for 'Freedom of Association:' Segregationist Rights and Resistance in Atlanta," in Webb, 107.

[1101] Bolton, *Hardest Deal*, 108-09.

[1102] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 366-67; William C. Keady, *All Rise: Memoirs of a Mississippi Federal Judge* (Recollections Bound, 1988); cf. Jack Bass, *Unlikely Heroes: The Dramatic Story of the Southern Judges of the Fifth Circuit Who Translated the Supreme Court's Brown Decision into a Revolution for Equality* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).

of students and fellow-teachers, both African American and white. 'You can teach one student as well as you can another,' she said, reflecting on the matter of individuality and race."[1103]

Desegregation Orders Failed to Achieve Substantial Integration

The Rev. Richard T. Harbison, a son of the First Church in Greenville, remembered Judge William C. Keady with affection. Keady had given the charge to the new minister when Harbison was ordained and installed July 29, 1958, by Central Mississippi Presbytery as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Canton.[1104] Harbison recorded this personal impression of the desegregation of the schools in Greenville, where he was reared:

> On one of my visits [back] to Greenville in the early '70s, I walked by E. E. Bass Junior High and watched a young African American student raising the American flag in front of the school. It was for me a poignant moment, for that was the same job I had carried out many years before as the so-called 'mayor' of the school. But unfortunately, the desegregation of the schools in Greenville, and throughout the Delta, resulted in a virtually all-black school system. Although Greenville had been known for its racial tolerance, school desegregation was met by massive white flight and the rise of private academies, leaving the city's public schools with approximately 95% black students.

He continued that, "A few well-off white families, such as the [Leroy] Percys [members of the First Presbyterian Church and the [Hodding, Jr.] Carters [who were Episcopalians], along with a group of poorer white families stayed with the public schools at the beginning of desegregation, but to this day [1995] the situation has not noticeably changed. In nearby Issaquena County, there are no public schools. African American students are bussed to another county."[1105]

The Supreme Court, on appeal, ruled that all Mississippi public schools must be desegregated in time for the 1970-1971 year. The legislature attempted additional measures to assist families of children in private schools, but the plan to provide $200 per year loans to such families was blocked by the federal courts. Governor John Bell Williams announced plans whereby Mississippi officials would file lawsuits to desegregate all-white school districts in the North. In January 1971, an additional 30,000 whites left the public schools of Mississippi. Private school enrollment rose to 44,497, more than double the 1969 figure. Between 1966 and 1970, the number of private schools rose from 121 to 236, and the number of students attending tripled.[1106]

Many districts pleaded for a continuation of Freedom of Choice. In Tunica, school board president Wesley Bailey, an elder in the Presbyterian Church there, claimed that African American teachers, "were not qualified to teach white children." The school board argued that whites would not accept anything beyond token desegregation. The federal court answered that if "hostility to school desegregation" was used to determine the school board's obligations, then "white parents would become the ultimate arbiters of the Constitution." Thus, as Charles C. Bolton observed, "After 16 years of delays and token desegregation, a steady stream of legal actions by black parents and federal intervention finally toppled the 95-year-old system of segregated schools in Mississippi. By the end of 1970, the dual school system had been eliminated in all of the state's school districts."

Whites abandoned public schools almost entirely in many communities. As a result, a new kind of segregation ensued. Segregation by class and economic standing was almost as successful at separating the races as the old segregation laws had been. In Canton, for example, nearly every one of the district's 1,200 white students left to attend the new Canton Academy. Municipalities such as Woodville, Hollandale, and Greenwood quickly reduced

[1103] *Holly Springs South Reporter* (January 6, 1983).

[1104] Harbison, "Why So Fertile a Land," 25.

[1105] Harbison, "Why So Fertile a Land," 27-28; see James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[1106] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 368, 371, 374; Bolton, *Hardest Deal*, 173.

local school taxes. In other locations, such as Columbia, school integration was accomplished without massive white flight. In Cleveland many, though not all, whites continued to attend the public schools.

Most recognized that a system of public education had to be maintained for the good of all. In a 1971 speech at Jackson's Heidelberg Hotel, Senator Stennis said that "Private schools are not the answer for education of the masses of people in Mississippi." Following the implementation of desegregation orders, Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. William Winter strongly supported public schools in Jackson, but received postcards with the message, "You are being watched."[1107]

As thousands of Mississippians, including many Presbyterians, removed their children from public schools (often citing Supreme Court decisions about school prayer as a precipitating cause), some sent their children to schools begun by local Presbyterian congregations—a new twist on the older Presbyterian propensity for establishing schools in the era before public schools. A few Presbyterian congregations made efforts to support public schools. For example, when local churches were asked to provide classroom space for a newly organized academy, the Holly Springs Church declined to offer its educational building, as did the First Church of Hattiesburg, when asked for space to house an academy being organized under White Citizens' Council auspices.

Although most were committed Christians, few African American families withdrew support from public schools based on concerns about the religious character of the education provided. They also voiced concerns over the teaching of evolution or other matters brought forward as reasons for leaving public schools by families who sent children to segregated private academies.[1108]

The 1958 PCUS Assembly had recorded its opposition "to the use of any facilities owned by any of its churches for the establishment of schools . . . or the purpose of evading the decrees of the courts . . . regarding segregation." This admonition, however, was ignored in many Mississippi communities.

The first Presbyterian private school to be organized in the state was Jackson's Presbyterian Day School, which opened in the fall of 1965, as an entity of the First Presbyterian Church. Presbyterian Day Schools were also organized in the Mississippi communities of Clarksdale, Cleveland, Columbia, Columbus, Greenwood, Gulfport, and Laurel. Some churches like Alta Woods in Jackson did not establish schools, but leased space to groups that did. Jackson's Reformed Seminary implemented a program offering master's-degree-level preparation for private school teachers and administrators. The Rev. Norman E. Harper, a member of Central Mississippi Presbytery, headed the new program. Advertising "superior education in a Christian environment," the private church schools were supported almost exclusively by whites—and also in the Delta by conservative Chinese families and by Jews, even though the Presbyterian schools almost all required participation in Bible classes that included study and memorization of passages from the Christian scriptures.[1109]

One effect of white flight and private education in Mississippi was that white young people grew up with almost no personal or social interaction with African Americans. In some ways, the divide was more complete than in pre-desegregation days, as then many families employed African American servants, giving white children at least some opportunity to have significant interaction with individuals from another race. Not until they entered college did many Mississippi youth encounter persons of another race and culture in any appreciable number. Even then, many joined fraternities or sororities where few, if any, African Americans were admitted.

In many quarters, Mississippians were skeptical of education. Chris Myers Asch has observed that, "Using logic that would not have been unfamiliar to plantation owners, some local leaders argued that encouraging young people to achieve at high levels and attend top colleges was dangerous, for it could lead to the young people leaving the area." This attitude could be found among both African American and white Mississippians, and indeed, a majority of students graduating from the public universities, did leave the state. Asch note that, "In county after county, the story has been the same: young blacks abandoned the region, leaving behind an older,

[1107] *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 168-69, 173, 179, 182, 375; Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 152-53.

[1108] "Creed and Color in the School Crisis," *Christianity Today* (March 27, 1970); Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 269-72.

[1109] Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton, *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008); Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham, Md.: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003).

poorer community." Randy J. Sparks noted that another loss in the small towns of Mississippi was the retirement of many white teachers who had stayed with the public schools and offered their skill to educate African American students newly integrated into the formerly white public schools. Many African American educators also moved on to other locales as greater opportunities and better salaries beckoned from other states.[1110] Many of these teachers were Presbyterian.

Mississippi's African American and moderate white Presbyterians, led by William F. Winter, the state's first Presbyterian governor in a generation, supported public education and expressed no qualms about any perceived lack of religious freedom in public schools. The Rev. William G. McAtee in Columbia and the Rev. Reginald V. Parsons in Holly Springs worked in their communities to ease the transition to integrated schools. Parsons ran for the local school board.[1111]

White Presbyterians such as Parsons kept their children in the public schools at a time when such decisions occasioned white criticism, yet many Presbyterian teachers were distinguished by work in public education during this period—labor sometimes not supported by their churches or sessions. The Episcopal and United Methodist Churches in Mississippi supported public education and condemned establishment of private schools to evade desegregation, and the various Episcopal parochial schools within the state quickly adopted racially inclusive admissions policies.

Unlike many high government officials, Mississippi Congressman Jamie L. Whitten, a member of the Charleston Presbyterian Church, sent his daughter to an integrated school in Washington, D.C. Although he voted against the 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Voting Rights Acts, Whitten changed course, calling these votes "a severe misjudgment." He supported the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Whitten retired from the House in 1994 as America's longest-serving Congressman (53 years and two months). Mississippi's Presbyterian day schools eventually did open their doors to all students, but few African Americans chose to attend the private institutions. Some scholars have said that church-sponsored day schools did more to perpetuate segregation than any other resistance activity advocated by conservative religious leaders in the South. As more and more Mississippi Presbyterians turned to private academies for elementary and upper school education for their children, a smaller percentage of the state's Presbyterian young men and women attended church colleges.[1112]

Doors Begin to Open

All four PCUS seminaries had adopted policies of integration by 1951, following a Supreme Court ruling that overturned segregation in publicly supported graduate schools. Union in Richmond had admitted students on a nonsegregated basis to its graduate department since 1935—the first Southern educational institution to do so. E. T. Thompson stated also that, "The [Union] faculty has never had any prejudice against women in the classroom." Women were admitted on regular basis in 1957.[1113]

Although a few African Americans had studied there in earlier years, the Rev. Isaac Crosby of Bay Springs, Mississippi, a graduate of Stillman College, was the first African American officially admitted to the bachelor of divinity program at Union Seminary in 1959. He was also the first African American student to reside on campus. The time had not come when an African American could be ordained by a white-controlled Mississippi presbytery. Upon his graduation from Union in 1962, Crosby received a call to serve Faith Presbyterian Church, a small African American PCUS congregation in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and he was ordained to that work by the PCUS Presbytery of East Arkansas. He served on the PCUS Board of World Missions and later was a professor

[1110] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 272.

[1111] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 217.

[1112] James J. Kilpatrick, "Back to Segregation, By Order of the Courts," *National Review* (June 16, 1970): 611-26; See *Holly Springs South Reporter* (January 6, 1983): 1, 3.

[1113] Thompson, *The Days of Our Years*, 77.

of philosophy and religion at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. He went on to earn master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from Union Seminary.[1114]

—photo from Union Presbyterian Seminary.

The Rev. Isaac Crosby of Bay Springs was the first regularly admitted African American degree student at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. Upon his graduation in 1962, it was not possible for an African American to be ordained by a white-controlled PCUS presbytery in Mississippi. He was ordained by East Arkansas Presbytery and later served the PCUS Board of World Missions.

Belhaven Desegregates

PCUS colleges also gradually opened their doors to African Americans: King College in Tennessee being the first in 1954 and Belhaven the last in 1966. By 1969, church doors were open as well, as in Hattiesburg where the session of the First Presbyterian Church adopted a statement that, "Our church [has] no official policy of excluding anyone from our services because of race, or color."[1115]

Belhaven thrived in this era. During the presidency of Howard J. Cleland, many new buildings were added to the campus. New dormitories were erected for the men, named for W. Calvin Wells, the college's longest-serving board member, as well as Stokes V. Robertson, a member of the Mississippi Supreme Court. Both were members of the session of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church. A new women's residence hall, honoring the memory of Mignonne Howell Caldwell, a longtime teacher in the college, was also dedicated. A new gymnasium was constructed and other buildings were renovated.

Cleland assembled an excellent faculty, and the entrance scores of freshmen on the ACT exam were six points above the mean score of students entering college in Mississippi. Among the professors in the Bible Department were John N. Akers, W. Wilson Benton Jr., J. Knox Chamblin, Walter A. Elwell, J. Julius Scott Jr., and James R. Wilburn.[1116]

But in spite of the increased enrollment and impressive additions to the campus real estate, there was an underlying issue that pressed for resolution. The greatest crisis before the college in the 1960s was the issue of desegregation. Although some Presbyterian colleges in the Border States had admitted African American students

[1114] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 355.
[1115] Lucas, *Grace Transforms*, 39.
[1116] Lucas, *Grace Transforms*, 93-116.

with little controversy, Deep South Belhaven was the last PCUS college to admit African American students, an action that came in 1967 as the school faced the loss of federal funds. (Nearby Southwestern at Memphis had desegregated in 1963, when faced with similar financial considerations.)

Intense controversy surrounded the Belhaven board's decision to sign a non-discriminatory policy with regard to race or color, so that the college might receive federal assistance through guaranteed student loans, equal-opportunity grants, and work-study programs. The board empowered Judge Michael L. Carr Jr. of Brookhaven, its chairman, to sign the Assurance of Compliance with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

When the board voted to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act that required that "no person shall on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the applicant receives federal financial assistance," longtime board member R. G. Kennington asked that the annual report of the college record his opposition to the board's action. These actions occasioned overtures of protest from the sessions of several congregations known for their conservatism—the Prentiss, Bay Street, and Macon Churches, as well as Westminster Church of Jackson. Central Mississippi Presbytery also enacted a protest. Segregationists challenged the college's broadened policy on the floor of the synod in 1967, but their efforts to have the new policy changed failed. Independent, fundamental Bob Jones University in South Carolina stood fast, however, giving up its federal funds and maintaining segregation and rules forbidding interracial dating until 2000.[1117]

Belhaven Gathering of Young Theologians Addresses Issues of Concern

Change seemed to come more slowly in the Church than, for example, in public schools, where the decrees of federal courts spearheaded the effort. A bright spot in the ecclesiastical standoff came when a Christian Ethics Conference was held at Belhaven College May 30-June 1, 1966. This gathering of younger Presbyterians was, according to William G. McAtee, "a liberating experience for the conferees. They soon discovered they shared many similar views on the subjects discussed. Where they differed, there was no fear of recrimination for doing so. . . . A style of working was established that would see the conferees productively through many subsequent ecclesial debates." Although not all the conferees remained in the PCUS, some moved toward the Episcopal Church; others in later years became Evangelical Presbyterians. The papers presented clearly articulated a more progressive theology of race relations, as well as other subjects. While not speaking in any official capacity either for the Church or the college, the Belhaven conference indicated that some desired positive change.[1118]

The Rev. Park H. Moore, Jr., an Atlanta native, graduate of Davidson College and Columbia Seminary, and pastor of Jackson's Trinity Presbyterian Church, explained, that "We have chosen the area of race relations as one which is changing and is probably the one social change affecting most people." He observed that, "We can talk about it now in a way we could not three or four years ago." For example, Moore recalled that, "A sermon preached four years ago brought angry visits by all seven members of the pulpit committee which had nominated me to the congregation." He then remarked that, "The same truths have been proclaimed more recently with more appreciative acceptance." Moore asserted that, "The Church has been too silent too long."[1119]

The Rev. J. Julius Scott Jr., also an Atlanta native and a graduate of Wheaton College in Illinois and Columbia Seminary, had served two years as pastor in Brandon and was then a professor at Belhaven. Scott gave an address on the biblical aspects of race relations. Writing a decade after President Gillespie, Scott's paper presented the thinking of a younger generation. He argued for the biological and spiritual unity of all humanity as the teaching of Genesis 1-11. Dealing with the curse on Ham, he noted that it was not proper to class all of Ham's descendants as

[1117] Alvis, 90-91; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (1967): 65-67; *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:546.

[1118] McAtee, *Dreams*, 87.

[1119] Park H. Moore Jr., "Christian Responsibility in Changing Social Patterns," unpublished remarks presented at the Belhaven Christian Education Conference (May 31-June 1, 1966). Copy in author's possession.

inferior peoples, pointing out that the curse was not placed upon all his descendants, but only on the youngest son, Canaan, who had settled "from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, then toward Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:19), that is the occupants of the 'Land of Canaan.'" He concluded that, "The Negro cannot be included in the group cursed by Noah in Genesis 9." Scott said further, that even if the passage were interpreted that Canaan was cursed, there was nothing to imply that he was made inferior; he was only assigned to servanthood. "Paul, in speaking to masters and slaves. . . assumes that they are all inherently equal, they differ only in social status and professional position." He said, further, "It is again Paul who gives the clearest New Testament expression of [this concept of equality among all human beings] when, in his address on the Aeropagus of Athens, he affirms that God 'made of one every nation of mankind to live upon the face of the earth' (Acts 17:26)."

Scott also noted the scriptural teaching of human creation in the image of God and said that, "Without digressing to discuss the meaning and nature of the *imago dei*, it is sufficient for our purposes here to note that the image of God in man renders human life sacred (Genesis 9:10), makes the degradation of another individual a spiritual offense (James 3:9), and serves as the pattern for spiritual renewal and regeneration (Colossians 3:10)." He asserted that, "The Scriptures take pains to emphasized that 'God is not a respecter of persons' (Acts 10:34-35)." He noted that the idea is repeated at least eight times in the Bible, as well as frequently in the writings of the early Church, particularly as this concerned the esteem and treatment to be given to the poor of the Christian community (James 2:1). Scott voiced the opinion that, "The natural unity of mankind before God becomes even stronger within the redeemed community. The common bond between believers is so great that the Bible insists that natural divisions, such as those between Jew and Greek, Scythian, Barbarian, male and female, slave and free are rendered inconsequential; for all are one in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11)." While allowing for physical, cultural, intellectual, and social differences, Paul's point in those passages was "that these things must not be allowed to detract in any way from the real spiritual 'oneness' which exists among all who are 'in Christ.'"

Scott argued that "The problem of racism was one of the earliest faced by the Christian Church. This involved the dealings between Jewish Christians and, first, the Samaritans, then the Gentiles." With regard to the Samaritans, Jesus had given no countenance to this feud between neighbors, including Samaria on his itinerary as he proclaimed the kingdom of God. He talked with the Samaritan woman at the well and remained with those of her city, Sychar, two full days. He made a Samaritan the hero of the familiar parable of the man who fell among thieves, declaring that the hated Samaritan was to be regarded as "the neighbor," and finally, "pointedly included Samaria in the area to be evangelized" by the Church. "Although Jewish Christians were appalled at the thought of accepting and associating with Samaritans—Acts notes that the acceptance of Samaritan believers into the Church came only after a top-level investigation (Acts 8:14ff). They were positively repulsed at the influx of Gentiles into the Church. Some justification for accepting Samaritans may have been found in the fact that they were half-Jews who were circumcised and obeyed, in their own way, the Mosaic Law. The acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles was quite a different matter." Scott observed that Paul's Jewish critics "were willing to tolerate Paul and his defense until he interjected the 'race issue' and proposed that Gentiles were included in God's plan and blessing (Acts 22:21-22)." Jewish and Gentile Christians worshiped together and dined at a common table. Although this was difficult even for the Apostle Peter to accept, "Eventually the Gentile Christians were completely merged with the Jewish Church on the basis of complete equality. Nevertheless, there were some Jewish Christians who could not accept this religious integration. Early Patristic literature notes the existence of such Jewish Christian groups as the Ebionites and Nazarites (and/or the Nazarenes) who refused fellowship with Gentile Christians and, until their extinction, segregated themselves on both doctrinal and national principles."

Scott said that "There are others," including himself, "who are in agreement with the concept of salvation and the nature of the Church of this second position, but who firmly believe there are unavoidable social implications with the gospel. They feel that the Bible places social responsibility within a certain context, as the result rather than the means of salvation." "The social activists who believe salvation to be an act of God and the Church as a spiritual body which must fundamentally seek to call men to Christ for spiritual regeneration may see in the Old Testament prophets an example of the proper place and relationship for social action by the child of God. Certainly,

no moral reformer could speak more strongly against social orders than did the prophets. Yet this prophetic condemnation of social evil is primarily an attempt to alert ancient Israel to its fundamental problem, that of forsaking Yahweh and the obligations of his covenant. . . . God's people were to be holy as Yahweh their God was holy. Their lives, including their dealings with their fellow men, were to be in keeping and in harmony with the nature of God with whom they were in covenant relation." The same principle applied in the New Testament, as in the Johannine admonition, "If anyone may say, 'I am loving God,' but he is hating his brother, he is a liar; for he who is not a lover of his brother whom he has seen, cannot love the God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20)." Scott called believers in Christ to be transformers of the society in which they lived.[1120]

In a paper titled, "Christian Responsibility in Changing Social Patterns," the Rev. William G. McAtee, born at Shaw and reared in Brookhaven, a graduate of Southwestern and Louisville Seminary, then pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Columbia, argued that "The theology of scripture is neither confined to the efficacy of correct doctrinal formulations, nor is it limited to personal religious experience which opens the way to life after death." Instead, "it has a great deal to say about the deliverance of a people from the bondage of sin to serve in the everyday realities of life here and now," as well as to be "interpreters and instruments of God's will and purpose for the nations of the world." McAtee argued that "Jesus Christ concerned himself with all the needs of people and vividly related the inheritance of the kingdom with performance of tangible services to men in social relationships." He said that, "Having gathered for reflection, the church scatters, individually or in groups, to be the 'leaven within the lump' (possibly the 'salt within the stew') of society. In this way the power of Christianity is felt more as presence than as an organized entity." McAtee observed that, "Today, someone is going to lead the world," and said that "The time has come for Christians to decide if they will assume the risks and take the lead."

The question that pressed hardest on the Church in Mississippi was race relations, and McAtee asserted that, "It is not so much on the basis of race, as such, but because of the presence of injustice and oppression throughout the whole of society, that it is imperative for the church to exert itself in helping to remove this blight against humanity." Noting that Christians often substituted charity for justice, he said that "What makes freedom possible is justice under law—a law which is always under the judgment of a higher law." Reaching for a lesson from American history, he said that it refuted certain kinds of calls for the separation of church and state and that "to remove the state from the judgment of a higher ethical law is to cast it into the clutches of a more devastating tyranny." "The founding fathers, moved by deep religious conviction rebelled in the American Revolution, not as an attempt to overthrow, subvert, or deny the authority of the government," but their rebellion "was against the abuse of authority which ruled them without representation or regard for their welfare. Their efforts were to gain admittance to the government and make it more responsible."

McAtee believed that "The American Dream at its best is, by having more citizens participating in choosing who will govern, representatives will be produced who will represent and govern more equally and justly on behalf of all the people. But whether this happens or not, regardless of public opinion, depends on how a decent respect for the opinions of others is brought to bear upon the situation. . . . It is the genius of Christianity that makes it possible for men of divergent backgrounds and differences of opinion to come together. . . . In Christ there is a power so strong that his followers are enabled to rise above the differences they clutched so tightly B.C. in their lives. For he has broken down the dividing walls of distrust, fear, hatred, and revenge; and mortised in their place trust, courage, love, and forgiveness. These form the foundation on which is built a decent respect for the opinions of others." He reminded his hearers that, "Prophets and priests of old were deluded in thinking it most profitable to remain silent in the face of social, economic, and political oppression only to find eventually that their silence was at the cost of divine judgment (cf. Ezekiel 22)." In a pastoral note, he said, "The ultimate expression of Christian responsibility is not so much whether or not a particular change is effected, but what happens to the

[1120] J. Julius Scott Jr., "Some Observations Regarding the Biblical and Theological Principle Relating to the Responsibility of the Church in a Changing Social Order with Special Reference to the Issues of Race," unpublished paper presented at the Belhaven Christian Ethics Conference (May 31-June 1, 1966). Copy in author's possession.

people involved." McAtee closed by asking, "If the specific and concrete direction of redemption of people in their social setting is not set by those committed to God's will, who on earth will set it?"[1121]

Mississippian Recalls Segregationist Reactions to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Calls for Justice

Throughout the 1960s, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s name came increasingly before Mississippi Presbyterians. But he was a troubling figure in his time. As the Very Rev. Samuel T. Lloyd III, dean of Washington Cathedral—and a son of Canton, Mississippi—has remembered, "I can tell you, he was no hero in the white world of the small Mississippi town to which my family moved in 1965. I was in high school then, and there were plenty who hated him. Most of my family saw themselves as moderates—certainly not racists, but not inclined to get involved in this troublesome cause. . . . Everyone just went about their business, kept their heads down, and waited for it to pass."[1122]

King received wide coverage in the secular media, but Mississippians were present when he preached at Montreat's Christian Action Conference, in the historic Anderson Auditorium on August 21, 1965; others read about his visit in the church papers. Some were distressed by the invitation for King to speak at Montreat, to "desecrate" the place where so "many eloquent and consecrated" ministers had spoken, and efforts were made in the General Assembly to have the invitation rescinded. The Concerned Presbyterians organization asserted that the invitation to King "has not only compromised the doctrinal position of our Church but has provoked more friction . . . than any other single event in recent years." The Concerned Presbyterians charged that King denied the Virgin Birth, professed a lack of interest in sin and salvation, and rejected the deity of Christ. They also said, "It has been proved that Dr. King has identified himself with more than 60 communist-front organizations or activities cited as subversive by official government agencies."[1123]

Presbyterian Reactions to King Assassination

In the months leading up to King's assassination, the Rev. Paul Tudor Jones, pastor of Memphis' Idlewild Presbyterian Church, as well as the congregation's associate pastor, the Rev. John William Aldridge—both ministerial sons of Mississippi Presbyterian churches (Jones at Corinth and Aldridge at Leland)—worked to reconcile rapidly-escalating tensions occasioned by a strike of African American Memphis sanitation workers.[1124] The under-industrialized city had little experience with labor relations. On the day, the strike was called, the Memphis Ministers' Association, which had become nominally integrated the previous summer had, by coincidence, but knowing of the rising dispute, designated February 11 as Race Relations Sunday. The association had previously issued a statement condemning race prejudice as immoral. This placed the ministers at odds with Henry Loeb, the city's mayor, widely popular with the conservative white citizenry. At least one other Memphis Presbyterian, the Rev. Dick Moon, campus chaplain at Memphis State University, sided with the strikers, but as historian Michael K. Honey has concluded, "None of [the ministers] could leverage enough white community pressure to offset the mayor's claim to speak for white Memphis." City Councilman Lewis Donelson, a leader in Idlewild Church,

[1121] William G. McAtee, "Christian Responsibility in Changing Social Patterns: Church and State Relationship in its Practical Aspects," unpublished paper presented at the Belhaven Christian Ethics Conference (May 31-June 1, 1966). Copy in author's possession.

[1122] Samuel T. Lloyd III, *Sermons from the National Cathedral: Soundings for the Journey* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013): 161.

[1123] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 215; "Attempts to Block King Defeated by Assembly," *Presbyterian Journal* 27 (May 5, 1968): 8; "Paul's Gospel and Today's Social Problems," *Concerned Presbyterian* (October 1965): 2-3, cited in Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 255-56.

[1124] Lechtreck, *Southern White Ministers and the Civil Rights Movement*, 153.

however, pressed a resolution before the city council, urging it to recognize the sanitation workers' union and open the way to a settlement. He had earlier advocated for more city sponsorship of job training as well as other efforts to improve the economic condition of its poor residents.

Donelson's effort resulted in a tie vote, and the police killing of an African American teenager created the situation that caused King to answer calls from Memphians for his help. He had met and preached with Black leaders and union workers in the city's historic former Second Presbyterian Church building downtown at the corner of Pontotoc and Hernando. (Since the Second Church congregation's move to the suburbs, the structure had housed the Clayborn Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, an African American congregation.) On the night of April 4, 1968, a meeting of Black and white ministers and other city leaders was under way in the parlor of Idlewild Church. The group was drawing up a resolution to present to the mayor calling for summer employment and recreation programs for disadvantaged youth in Memphis. While they were completing the resolution, word came that Dr. King had been assassinated on the balcony of the city's Lorraine Motel.[1125]

Dr. King's assassination occasioned a sudden response from Presbyterians throughout Mississippi and around the world. Just prior to the Memphis shooting, Mississippi's Congressmen and Senators had joined others to oppose President Johnson's Open Housing Bill, but during the emotional period that followed, the measure was passed and signed into law by the president on April 10. On May 18, six weeks after Dr. King's assassination, 450 participants in the Poor People's March on Washington were hosted by volunteers on the campus of Union Seminary in Richmond.

Even those who had not supported his work deplored the violent manner of his death, and the civil rights leader's death, coming as it did between the assassinations of President Kennedy, and his brother Robert, then a senator from New York and candidate for president, killed on June 6, 1968. King's assassination was the occasion of soul-searching, as the nation pondered the anarchy and violence that seemed to threaten its stability, if not its survival. Racial riots followed King's death, and continued protests in the streets and on college campuses against the Vietnam War followed throughout the summer. The Democratic National Convention in Chicago was disrupted on August 28 by violent police action to suppress anti-war protests. Reuben Anderson, Mississippi's first African American state supreme court justice, was appointed by Governor Bill Alain in this period.[1126]

Still, when *The Presbyterian Survey*, the PCUS denominational monthly, published as its cover photo a picture of the slain civil rights leader's flower-bedecked coffin along with tributes for his work, subscriptions dropped precipitously. When the 1969 General Assembly approved a recommendation to hold a memorial service for Dr. King the following year when the Assembly was to meet in Memphis, conservatives offered a resolution to prevent the service from being held. The overture, signed by elder H. S. Williford from Jackson's First Church (long associated with Reformed Seminary), as well as other commissioners, was expressed in such strong language that, after it was defeated by a large vote, the moderator ordered that the text of the resolution be expunged from the minutes. The Concerned Presbyterians organization also made opposition to the King memorial service a priority in its planning for the 1970 General Assembly. As Sean Michael Lucas observed, "Conservatives made their feelings about King widely known; he was not a force for reconciliation and good for them."[1127]

Many felt the world, as they knew it, was unraveling. During the 1950s and early 1960s, there had been a certain confidence that a prosperous society whose children had access to education, and disposable income could accomplish great things, including the transformation of society and spread of American values throughout the world. This national mood of hopefulness was toppled with the Vietnam War, the race riots of 1966-68, and the high-profile assassinations of national leaders in this period. There were also private struggles. People struggled over sexual ethics, the draft, and the place of women and racial minorities in society. A period of inflation took income from the pockets of ordinary people. Throughout the 1960s, people began to question traditional sources

[1125] Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007): 156, 255, 359, 392-94; Magness, *History of Idlewild Presbyterian Church,* 56-57. The Lorraine Motel is preserved as part of Memphis' National Civil Rights Museum.

[1126] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 354-55.

[1127] *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:382; Lucas, *For a Continuing Church*, 199.

of authority, including the governing bodies of the Church. Between 1960 and 1980, church attendance in the United States declined by 20%.

General Assembly Hears Complaints Against Synod of Mississippi

Against this background, complaints with respect to the Synod of Mississippi's avoidance on matters required by the Assembly reached that body's Permanent Judicial Commission on June 5, 1968. The complainants were represented by the Revs. Larry D. Kennon, Thomas H. McDill, Robert W. Tabscott, and Edwin R. Wilson. The respondents were represented by the Revs. W. J. Stanway and Horace L. Villee and elders Frank Horton of Mt. Salus Church in Clinton and Cleveland E. Davis of Itta Bena.

The Assembly's commission ruled that the action of the synod's called meeting fell short. It ruled that the Synod of Mississippi had not in good faith submitted itself to the expressed will of the Assembly, observing the letter but not the spirit of the Assembly's directive, "which it is the Synod's constitutional and Christian duty to do." The commission recognized that, "While there are constitutional and practical limits to what a synod can do," it was apparent that the synod "did less than it could have done, less than was required by the General Assembly, and less than was needed to correct the abuses which the General Assembly has found to exist in the Synod of Mississippi."

The commission declared that the synod's response "displays an intention to avoid the direction of the General Assembly." It reminded the Mississippians that, "Under the Presbyterian form of government the Synod is responsible to take action where a Presbytery 'neglects to perform its duty,' and 'where corrupt practices are allowed to gain ground' (BCO 114-5). It is given the power to 'redress whatever may have been done contrary to order' and to take care that presbyteries obey 'the lawful injunctions of higher courts' (BCO 17-5) (2) (3). Synod is also given power to cite presbyteries to appear and show what has been done to correct delinquency (BCO 114-06)." The Assembly voted without debate to sustain the judgment of the Permanent Judicial Commission.

At its June 1968 meeting, the synod established a committee to meet with its three presbyteries. It stated that, "The Synod must recognize the position set forth by the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly and approved by the General Assembly of 1967—the final outworking of the Hart matter—that 'The Presbytery has original jurisdiction to examine ministers (BCO 16-5) and to receive them (BCO 16-7 (13), and in so doing may, in good faith, exercise a broad discretion not to be questioned except when exercised with manifest bias and prejudice, and then only in specific cases brought to the higher courts by regular judicial process, or by review and control' (BCO 113-1)."[1128] As with the assimilation of the African American congregations, the matter ended in an impasse. The Assembly's pastoral approach had failed. Within five years, the logjam would soon be broken by actions on the part of both parties. Ecclesiastical politics, not the careful application of provisions in the Book of Order, would finally push the PCUS to a catastrophic schism.

Freedom Democrats Unseat Regular Delegates at 1968 Convention

Similar events were happening in the realm of secular politics. Loyalist Democrats, successors to the Freedom Democratic Party, were seated in place of the Regular Democrats at the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention. Governor John Bell Williams, leader of the Regular Democrats, announced that he would campaign for independent candidate George Wallace. The "Regulars," as a group, had not supported their party's presidential ticket since 1956. On November 5, 1968, Mississippi gave its votes to Wallace, with Democrat Hubert Humphrey running second and Republican candidate Richard Nixon, third. Nationwide, Nixon was the winner, running on a platform of "law and order." Violence in the state continued during 1968. Gun blasts, dynamite, or fire hit Head Start offices, churches, and homes of civil rights leaders in Meridian, Carthage, Hattiesburg, Natchez, Florence,

[1128] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 3, 1968).

and in rural Franklin County.[1129] Presbyterians in Mississippi labored under unfavorable, highly conflicted conditions, seeking a voice, but divided as to what should be said or done.

State Sovereignty Commission Director Erle E. Johnston Experienced Change of Heart

Different people changed at various rates and were prompted by different influences. It was a time of overwhelming social and cultural reevaluation in Mississippi. Even the director of the State Sovereignty Commission did not rest easy with his department's mission of promoting segregation and states' rights, with the economic, religious, and human costs this entailed. Erle E. Johnston, in many ways the state's most influential Presbyterian in the period, was troubled. Few Mississippians were born as social or theological progressives. Most who spent their lives in the state testified to an evolution in thought and practice. Johnston, a deacon in the Forest Church, who served during the 1960s as director of the State Sovereignty Commission, a government entity focused on preserving states' rights and racial segregation. Johnston was among those Presbyterians in Mississippi who experienced a change of mind with regard to his African American neighbors. As a newspaper editor in his hometown, Johnston defined his stance in the 1950s and 1960s as that of a "practical" segregationist. He believed himself to be "an unpredictable, editorial maverick, doing my own thinking as various situations arose." But as the years passed, even while he was administering the Sovereignty Commission, Johnston's thinking changed. Not only did he accept racial integration, but he also urged his white friends and neighbors to embrace change. According to Kenneth L. Dean, executive director of the Council on Human Relations, "I know that few people worked as Erle Johnston did to help nurse an angry threatened people into a more mature modern world."[1130]

Erle E. Johnston, director of the State Sovereignty Commission, newspaper editor, and a deacon and Sunday school teacher in the Forest Presbyterian Church was one influential Mississippian who experienced a change of heart with regard to racial segregation.

The evolution of Johnston's thinking is illustrated in his speeches and writings. Beginning with a commencement address he delivered at Grenada High School in the spring of 1962—four months before the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi, Johnston said, "There are those who vigorously wave their arms and argue that to give up an inch is to give up a mile. Yet they disregard the fact that the colored people of Mississippi, with the federal government and federal courts to support them, soon may be able to take that mile whenever they choose. It would seem far better to offer an inch of consideration across a table of harmony than to be forced to retreat further in an atmosphere of friction and bitterness. All of us have been lax in providing adequate recreational facilities for the colored people, but it is well for us to remember that we must either provide such facilities in the future or be prepared to share ours. . . .There are militant hotheads in both races. They must restrain theirs, and we must restrain ours. . . . As you graduates contemplate the decisions you may eventually have to make, let me suggest that courtesy is better than coercion, interest is better than intimidation, recognition is better than retribution, and friendship is better than force." In this way, Johnston was restating ideas put forward almost a decade earlier (but without legislative success) by Mississippi's Presbyterian governor Hugh L. White.

[1129] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 35-64.

[1130] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 402, xxix.

Reacting to the speech, W. J. Simmons, administrator of the Citizens' Council, told *The Clarion-Ledger* that "Johnston sounds like he is ready to surrender." Johnston retorted that "The Citizens' Councils have degenerated into a handful of leaders who depend for their very existence on the friction, emotionalism, and tension they can create." But State Tax Collector William Winter was quoted in the press as saying, "Erle Johnston said some things that needed to be said." *The Jackson Times*, an alternative paper in the state's capital, editorialized that, "All too seldom . . . there comes the calm voice of reason to remind us . . . that no specific group or section can isolate itself from the rest of the world."

The Birmingham News called Johnston's speech, "a major Southern utterance for its time." Johnston told *The Clarion-Ledger* that, "We have been preaching racial cooperation and harmony in the North. So why wouldn't it be in order to do the same at home?" *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* wrote that Johnston spoke, "what few in Mississippi have the courage to say—that groups like the Citizens' Councils have contributed to a breakdown of racial harmony in the state." Certainly, as events in the state approached a crisis as the desegregation of the University of Mississippi loomed on the horizon, a small fissure in the white power structure was beginning to appear. Several last stands for segregation would be made between 1962 and the federal court orders for immediate desegregation of all public schools between 1967 and 1971. As these met with failure, there was a greater willingness to reconsider old attitudes, as Johnston's own thinking illustrates. His position as director of the State Sovereignty Commission gave the evolution of his thought particular significance.[1131]

By the summer of 1967, Johnston wrote that he recognized that he had been appointed "to do whatever was within my power to slow down federal encroachment on the rights of the states, which meant preserving segregation and white supremacy. This, I could no longer do, within my own conscience." At first, he tried to use his position with the Sovereignty Commission to blunt the harshest aims of the segregationist power structure, reaching out quietly to African American leaders when and where he could. Bill Minor, Jackson correspondent for *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, wrote that, "Johnston provided the catalyst for bringing unyielding whites and determined blacks together and establishing some terms which both could accept." In 1968, Johnston resigned from the Sovereignty Commission and went back to editing his newspaper, *The Scott County Times*, also serving as mayor of his hometown, Forest, Mississippi. The Sovereignty Commission suspended operations in 1977 four years after Governor William Waller had vetoed further funding. In 1990, Johnston published an account of his change of mind entitled *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973: An Interpretive Documentary with Personal Experiences*. Former governor William Winter contributed a foreword for the book.[1132]

Johnston declared that "White Mississippians, who once winced in the 1950s as Ed Sullivan paraded black performers across his Sunday night television stage, think nothing now of eating in the same restaurants, sharing public restrooms, using the same hotel and motel accommodations, swimming in the same public pools, and sitting together at public events such as athletic contests or community banquets."

Other Mississippians also changed their views and attitudes. Among Presbyterian leaders in the public sphere was U. S. Senator John C. Stennis. In 1982, Stennis joined other members of the Mississippi Congressional delegation in voting for the latest extension of the Voting Rights Act, the very law that many white Mississippians so heatedly denounced in 1965.[1133]

Chris Asch noted that during the 1970s, "Residual racism remained a constant and formidable barrier to progress—it would take many decades for the generations of white people weaned on white supremacy to die off—but black voters no longer faced the legal obstacles to their participation in the political process."[1134]

[1131] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 139-43.

[1132] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 343, 352.

[1133] Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 403, 405.

[1134] Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper*, 281.

1969 PCUS Assembly Considers Ongoing Mississippi Conflicts

When the 1969 General Assembly convened in Mobile, the Committee on Mississippi Visitation admitted that, "We have not resolved all the problems that existed in the Synod of Mississippi and the Presbytery of Central Mississippi in 1966 when this *Ad Interim* Committee was first appointed. Nevertheless, we are somewhat encouraged and believe some progress, under the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, is in sight. It will be recalled that this Committee's instructions were 'to visit and examine this portion of the church affected with evident disorder; to inquire into the difficulties therein; and to report its findings and to recommend appropriate action to the next General Assembly.' The 'disorders' referred to by the 1966 General Assembly grew out of a number of long unsolved problems within the Synod of Mississippi. These included the failure of Central Mississippi Presbytery to comply with Assembly instructions regarding Negro churches within its bounds; the unusually long and involved examination of ministers seeking admission to Central Mississippi Presbytery; the complaint that the Commission on the Minister and His Work was going far beyond *The Book of Church Order* in determining whom churches could call as pastors; and other problems of a similar nature creating wide differences of opinion among both ministers and laity."

The committee reminded its hearers that it was not charged to solve these problems, only to inquire into the difficulties and offer recommendations. It had therefore regarded its function as investigative, advisory, and pastoral. It stated that it was gratified to have received no recent criticism of either the Commission on the Minister and His Work or examinations of ministers in the Central Presbytery. Also, during the past year, the presbytery had received the three African American churches within its bounds. The committee said, "We would report that we have met informally with two groups of pastors holding slightly different points of view, to discuss progress. While personal differences that have developed over the years are still not completely resolved, we are encouraged to believe the process of reconciliation has really begun. We are not unaware of the fact that in the matter of appointments to important committees of Presbytery there is evident need of a wider representation of points of view. Further, it is reported that a certain group in the presbytery still is consistently overlooked in the selection of commissioners to the General Assembly. This we believe hardly represents Presbyterianism at its best." It summed its report, urging "that those personally involved be reminded that the Spirit of Christ, not vindication of viewpoints, will provide the only secure foundation upon which permanent harmony and complete understanding can be established among Christian brethren." The Assembly also noted that Central Mississippi Presbytery had authorized "two camping programs, one of which is open to all persons." (In its 1954 statement on desegregation, the Assembly had urged that all PCUS colleges, campgrounds, and churches be open to all, regardless of race.) It continued the *Ad Interim* Visitation Committee, adding the Assembly's moderator to its membership. The Assembly instructed the Visitation Committee to concentrate on matters relating to the life and work of Central Mississippi Presbytery, to devise occasions to bring persons representing the different parties together, and to attend all meetings of the Central Presbytery during the year following.[1135]

Further Attempts at Reconciliation

The Presbyterian Outlook printed a letter from the Rev. Robert W. Tabscott, pastor of Jackson's Covenant Presbyterian Church that offered a very different viewpoint from the optimism expressed in the Assembly committee's report.[1136] In a further attempt to encourage conciliation, the presbytery adopted a proposal made by Dr. Edward D. Grant of Baton Rouge, a member of the General Assembly's Committee on Mississippi Visitation, to hold a special meeting in the autumn of 1969, whereby all the ministers and an elder from each congregation would come together informally to talk, pray, and consider together. The event was held at Jackson's Covenant

[1135] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1969): 54-55, 107, 199-200; (PCUS, 1954): 187-97; "Mississippi Visitors Get More Directions," *Presbyterian Journal* 28 (May 14, 1969): 10.

[1136] "Mississippi Story," *Presbyterian Outlook* 151 (April 14, 1969): 2.

Church. A telegram was read from the General Assembly's moderator, the Rev. R. Matthew Lynn, assuring the presbytery of the Assembly's prayers for a successful meeting. About 85 persons attended.[1137]

Many who attended the conciliation meeting at Covenant Church in the autumn of 1969, both conservative and liberal, left the event unsatisfied. One who attended was the Rev. W. A. Gamble, one of the meeting's senior ministers and former stated clerk of Central Mississippi Presbytery. He penned a lengthy statement that summarized remarks he made at the conciliation conference. Gamble styled the actions over time of those who opposed conservatives in the Presbytery as "The Attack upon the Presbytery of Central Mississippi." The pamphlet, published at the expense of several laymen, including J. Fred Wallace, G. Leo Brown, S. C. Wadsworth, and W. Calvin Wells, outlined the history of the controversy, and summed its conservative positions as follows: Belief "in the full inspiration and reliability. . . of the Bible," and

> That 'the Church of Christ is spiritual in its nature and in its mission. . . . and should not meddle in economic or political affairs;' that 'the Church of Christ is wrong in theory and wrong in practice when it makes declarations against military preparedness or against other efforts of our Nation, or its several States to defend our land and our citizens from those who plot against us or attack us and who would undoubtedly murder or enslave us if the shortsighted opinions of some churchmen were followed by those whose duty it is to protect our people;'
>
> That 'the Church has no business joining in 'demonstrations' in the streets or on school campuses. . . . or in any other enterprises that flout the law of the land;'
>
> That '*The Layman's Bible Commentary* contains statements out of accord with the Scriptures and should be suppressed if the errors are not to be corrected; and the same as to the Covenant Life Curriculum;'
>
> That 'Sunday school and other Bible courses and literature should be in strict conformity with the Scriptures, and they are not willing to purchase such materials or to teach them to the young people in our churches, if such materials are not in conformity with them;'
>
> That 'our Presbyterian Church, U. S., has no business being in the National Council of Churches or in the World Council of Churches, and they are not willing to give benevolent funds to such ecclesio-political organizations or propaganda enterprises;'
>
> That 'that their contributions to the business of preaching and teaching the Gospel throughout the world should not be diverted, by the Assembly or an Assembly agency, to other 'causes' that may be interesting to some who do not understand or do not subscribe to the doctrine that the church is spiritual in nature and in its mission;'
>
> That 'our Church should not be in the omnibus and unscriptural Consultation on Church Union (COCU);'
>
> That Confession 'we should not allow ourselves to be smothered by a merger with the liberal and much larger United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.;'
>
> That 'we should not write a new of Faith to satisfy modern apostasy;'
>
> That, 'like the demand for half a billion dollars or more for 'reparations' falsely alleged to be owed to a rebellious minority group, is an attempted blackmail on the part of those whom many believe to be intent upon destroying our land and its institutions. . . .'

The pamphlet, which urged that each of the items cited represented the beliefs of "many in the presbytery, a considerable majority, like many throughout our Church, and concluded with objections to the ordination of women and to revisions to the *Confession of Faith* concerning the remarriage of divorced persons, stating that all the matters referred to "are out of accord with the Scriptures and would destroy our Church, its Scriptural testimony, and its opportunity to be God's agency for urging men and women and young people to confess their sins, accept Christ as their personal Savior, and become reconciled to the God who gave us His Son, and who will

[1137] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 17, 1969): 21; (October 16, 1969): 17-18.

judge unrepentant, unsaved human beings for their rebellion against God." Interestingly, Gamble, long known as a vocal segregationist, did not mention the racial matters that had caused dissention within the presbytery and between it, the synod, and the General Assembly.

Still, Gamble had addressed secular matters, albeit from a different perspective than the Church's more liberal leaders. Such conservative declarations would move, in time, from private publications, into the resolves of church courts controlled by right-leaning presbyters. Perhaps impelled by fears of communism, the old doctrine of the Church's spirituality no longer presented a solid front.[1138]

Reflecting on these matters some years later, the Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger, the presbytery's former Executive Secretary for Church Extension, recalled that, "Our Central Mississippi Presbytery, in response to urgings from higher church courts, was compelled to consider receiving a Black congregation [Faith Church in Jackson] and its African American pastor, the Rev. William H. Jones into membership, but 'conservative, Bible Believing' pastors argued against this, not on the basis of the Bible, but expediency—that we would lose members to churches which practiced segregation. And it was primarily due to pressure from the Synod that this black congregation and pastor were received; and members were lost to more 'conservative,' segregated churches."[1139]

Visitation Committee Issues Final Report

In the spring of 1970, when the Assembly met at Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis, which now opened its doors to all, it was reported that the Synod of Mississippi had appointed a pastoral committee to work with the Assembly's committee, and that the two bodies had benefited from "splendid cooperation." "The *Ad Interim* Committee between the 1968 and 1969 Assemblies had meetings with Synod's pastoral committee and also with groups representative of the divisions in the Synod. The committee was encouraged to find that there were those in Central Mississippi Presbytery, who could hardly be classified as belonging to either division in the Synod, who were resolved to work toward correcting the injustices in the practices of the Presbytery, especially that in which the Presbytery refused to elect as a Commissioner to the General Assembly a member of the Pro-Assembly group regardless of the years of service in the Presbytery. These men had resolved to try to have placed on important committees in Presbytery and Synod members of the Pro-Assembly group who by reason of ability and experience were qualified. . . ."

The committee stated its conclusion, "that to resort to ecclesiastical force, or even pressure, would widen the breach between the divisions in Synod and in Central Mississippi Presbytery, and would not reconcile a single brother to another. . . . Not only so, any attempt to use force or pressure would set in motion a series of complaints and appeals that would continue over the years. . . ." Instead, "The Committees have sought to be channels for the working of the Holy Spirit." Further, it was reported that, "The [Visitation] Committee has never sought to reconcile the members of the Synod of Mississippi to the program and policies and pronouncements of the General Assembly. Efforts with this goal in mind would be futile." But "the *Ad Interim* Committee has tried to persuade the members of the Church Courts in Mississippi that even though their opinions differed as concerning many things, the gospel they professed and preached called them to be fair, and just, and forgiving, and loving, in all their dealings with one another." The Assembly's committee asked to be dissolved but urged that the body request that the Synod's Pastoral Committee continue its work, with the charge "to use every spiritual weapon at its disposal in wiping out the last vestiges of unfairness, injustice and unbrotherliness in the Church Courts of our beloved denomination in Mississippi."[1140]

[1138] W. A. Gamble, "The Attack upon the Presbytery of Central Mississippi" (Jackson: privately published, 1969).

[1139] Mounger, "Glances Back at Our Twentieth Century," 24-25.

[1140] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1970): 59, 99, 250-64.

Growing Pessimism Among PCUS Conservatives

The polity of the Presbyterian Church, like that of the federal government, was replete with checks and balances, designed to assure that change occurred only after careful consideration. Mississippi conservatives used this polity with great skill to resist change, especially as the Church's constitution required a two-thirds majority to change its doctrinal standards and even a three-quarters vote to unite with another denomination—in effect allowing a minority to rule the Church. The minority in this case was conservative, just as those who had designed these provisions had foreseen. These provisions suited the needs of Southern Presbyterian conservatives perfectly. But by the late 1960s, the moderate wing of the PCUS was gaining enough strength to have its way. Conservatives recognized this and expressed dismay. Still, PCUS conservatives dominated almost all aspects of the Church in Mississippi in a way they could not in most other sections of the General Assembly.

In a report on his attendance as a commissioner to the 1968 General Assembly representing Central Mississippi Presbytery, the Rev. Leland C. Jorgensen of Yazoo City noted that, in his sermon as retiring moderator, Dr. Marshall C. Dendy, Executive Secretary of the Board of Christian Education, spoke about "the distinct and deep division in our denomination," referring in particular to "areas of Mississippi where the Presbyterian constituency has been at odds with certain pronouncements of the General Assembly." According to Jorgensen, Dendy labeled "'something of a scandal,' situations raised by organized groups not under the control of any church court." Indeed, the Rev. Morton H. Smith, also of the Central Presbytery, stated that, "I personally am very concerned over the spiritual state of our Church. I wonder how much longer the Church can continue on this road before a division must come."

A dark view of the Church prevailed in most quarters of the conservative movement. Kenneth Keyes, head of the Concerned Presbyterians, wrote to the Rev. Donald B. Patterson, pastor of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church in November 1968, that "a split in the Church is coming in the next two to three years."

South Mississippi Presbytery's Committee on Christian Action

A few PCUS ministers and elders in Mississippi tried to guide the church in ways recommended by the General Assembly. In accord with the General Assembly's recommendation that each synod and presbytery have a Committee on Christian Action, the South Mississippi Presbytery elected such a body, which was chaired by the Rev. J. L. Stuart Jr., of Summit. Entering upon its work with due circumspection, Stuart reported January 17, 1966, that "The committee wishes to express to the presbytery deep concern over the many matters of which we are all aware. Christian life and action are intended, according to the scriptures, to arise from sound doctrine. The scope of Christian action is broad. It concerns not only issues of race and civil rights, but also many other issues such as alcoholism, church and state relationships, responsible citizenship, the family and its too frequent breakup, and labor problems. . . ." Calling the presbytery to engage in prayer and repentance, the committee noted that "Silence and inaction can be sinful," and called the presbytery to face honestly the implications of the biblical question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?"[1141]

In a subsequent report in January 1967, noting that his committee was interested in and praying for solutions concerning issues of race, understanding, love, and also, many other areas of life, Stuart recommended that, the presbytery pray "with repentance and open minds, seeking for the rule of the Mind and Spirit of Christ where prejudice and fear have reigned," noting that, "We study the scriptures to see what God has said already. We all deplore a 'social gospel' when it forgets Calvary and regeneration;" but he asked, "Are we alert to the Bible's verdict on the Gospel of new life and cleansing in the blood of the Lamb, while ignoring love? (see John 12:35 and 1 John 4:20)." Stuart also urged the presbytery to "consider seriously the effect of our attitudes and actions (or lack of them) on the mission fields."[1142] The committee was able to achieve little in the way of substance, but it served as a voice for moderation in the life of a synod whose words were becoming increasingly strident.

[1141] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (January 17, 1966): 24-25.

[1142] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (January 17, 1966): 24-25 (January 17, 1967): 27.

Integration Crisis Brings Calls for Closure of Camp Calvin

Federal court orders requiring full desegregation of public schools issued in 1967-1969 resulted in a certain defensiveness on the part of many Mississippians, a defensiveness that was expressed in efforts to perpetuate segregation in facilities beyond the reach of the federal courts. Some younger ministers ventured forward with desegregation plans but were stopped by their elders.

On April 17, 1969, the presbytery's Christian Education Committee, chaired by the Rev. James A. Turner, an assistant pastor of Jackson's First Church, declared that "Unless Presbytery wishes to instruct Presbytery's Christian Education Committee to the contrary, we will implement the decision of Presbytery to receive Negro churches in all Christian Education programs of the Presbytery, including the camps." However, there was a motion, adopted by a vote of 38 to 35, that youth conferences at Camp Calvin not be racially integrated unless and until specifically authorized by the presbytery. The matter was hotly debated and polarized the body.

Votes in the negative (that is, to allow integrated camping events to proceed) were recorded on request by the Revs. William H. Jones of Jackson's Faith Church, Larry D. Kennon of Trinity Church in Meridian, Richard O. Knott of Briarwood Church in Jackson, William F. Mansell of Vicksburg's First Church, Julius W. Melton, an administrator for Southwestern at Memphis, Park H. Moore of Jackson's Trinity Church, G. Roland Sims of Central Church in Jackson, Robert W. Tabscott of Covenant Church in Jackson: Morris A. Taylor of Canton, E. R. Wilson of Fondren Church in Jackson and elders Albert Bell Jr., W. L. Gill, and W. L. Liles Jr., with a complaint against the action then filed with the synod.

The complaint stated that "segregation in any form is contrary to our constitution and also damages our witness as the Body of Christ." Among the signers of the complaint was the Rev. William H. Jones, the African American pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in Jackson and Pilgrim Grove Church in Newton. Other complainants included commissioners Albert Bell Jr., Larry D. Kennon, Robert W. Tabscott, William F. Mansell, Julius W. Melton, and G. Roland Sims. The presbytery then (by vote of 39 to 24) instructed the Christian Education Committee to find a place "other than Camp Calvin where conferences could be held this summer for all the people of the presbytery."

The 1969 General Assembly took notice of the situation and called attention of the synod "to the camping situation in the Presbytery of Central Mississippi." The Central Mississippi Presbytery was then informed through the synod's Committee on Judicial Business, that the General Assembly had become aware through a questionnaire mentioned in the response to the stated clerk's report, "that the Presbytery of Mississippi, 'has authorized two camping programs, one of which is open to all persons.'" This committee, comprised of F. P. Amsler, Henry M. Hope, William McAiley, James G. Spencer, and W. Frank Wood, reminded the presbytery of its obligation to include all the churches within the camping program and requested that full discussion of policies be made at open meetings under the guidance of the presbytery.[1143]

The presbytery's special Camp Site Committee reported that since the presbytery had not been united in its camping program as evidenced by different groups having their own camps and retreats and recognizing that, "it is obvious that a presbytery-wide camp cannot be held at Camp Calvin," it recommended that the land comprising the campsite be sold. At his request, the Rev. Edwin R. Wilson's vote was recorded in opposition to this action.[1144]

The sessions of Jackson's Trinity and Briarwood Churches objected, as did the pastors Park H. Moore and Richard O. Knott, as well as elder Wilbur H. Howie of Trinity Church and the Rev. Edwin R. Wilson of Jackson's Fondren Church, who was the camp registrar.

Matters were clearly troubled. The Senior High Camp, to have been held at Camp Calvin under the leadership of the Rev. Joe Warner, pastor at Belzoni, was canceled for lack of registrations, though a Pioneer Camp at the same location, directed by the Rev. David Shepperson (pastor of Meridian's First Church) attracted 46 participants. A

[1143] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 17, 1969): 13-16; see Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 3, 1969): 30-32; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (June 4, 1969): 30-31; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1969): 55; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (June 3, 1970): 24-28; Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 17, 1969): 20; (October 16, 1969): 13; (July 16, 1970): 38-39; and (July 15, 1971): 23-24.

[1144] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 17, 1969): 30-31.

youth conference, "planned for *all* the young people of presbytery" (italics added) to have been held at Belhaven in July, however, was canceled for lack of reservations.[1145]

Action to sell the property was held in abeyance for a time in view of the acquisition of oil leases on the property, which were of financial benefit to the presbytery.[1146]

One of the last presbytery-wide events held at Camp Calvin was a picnic, organized by the presbytery's reconciliation committee, under the leadership of the Rev. David Shepperson Jr., April 27, 1972. The small camp was used sporadically by individual congregations and groups. In the summer of 1974, several retreats for junior high youth were held there, serving some 76 young people. The First Church of Vicksburg and the Trinity Church of Jackson also had retreats there.[1147]

No "Counter-Testimonies"

The Rev. R. Lee Carroll Jr., of Columbia Seminary, a native of McComb, spent most of his growing up years in Laurel, where his family was active in the First Presbyterian Church. He recalled that,

> During my years in college (initially Southwestern at Memphis, then, the University of Southern Mississippi, and at Columbia Seminary), I was keenly aware of the 'church wars' that eventually led many Presbyterians to leave for the PCA. Many claimed those battles were fought over theological fidelity, but it has long been my contention that it was actually a struggle about race relations, civil rights, and equality. . . . As I think back about my own gradual escape from the 'Closed Society' (if one ever really escapes it), I now realize how very naïve and uninformed I was as a teenager. That is no excuse, but we understood very little about what really fueled the struggle for civil rights. There were no 'counter testimonies,' as Walter Bruegemann would call it, to the dominant voices of white leaders about the civil rights agenda. Even after the national news networks began to give another view, we were warned that the media was controlled by communists.[1148]
>
> On August 11, 1971, at the annual *Presbyterian Journal* Day in Weaverville, North Carolina, the Steering Committee announced plans for a new denomination. According to press reports, Patterson said, "This is a truly historic day for all of us. We resolutely set our faces in a new direction. We shall, with God's help, preserve for future generations the witness of our historic faith—that faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Serving as vice-chair of the steering committee was the Rev. James M. Baird Jr. of Gadsden, Alabama, who would succeed Patterson in 1993 as pastor of Jackson's First Church. Subsequent to this, in 1973 and 1974, 50 congregations realigned from Central Mississippi Presbytery to the newly forming denomination, along with 33 from South Mississippi. Seventeen congregations from St. Andrew Presbytery either realigned or divided. The Synod of Mississippi, one of the smallest in the PCUS, suffered greater loss than any other in the Presbyterian realignments of the 1970s. These continued in the 1980s and 1990s, with the result that one could no longer speak of a "solid South" in Presbyterian terms.[1149]

[1145] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 17, 1969): 38.

[1146] See Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 16, 1969): 13, 21-22; (September 15, 1970): 25; (July 15, 1971): 23-34; (October 21, 1971): 34; (October 19, 1972): 20, 29.

[1147] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 17, 1969): 13-14; (October 17, 1974): 18.

[1148] Lee Carroll to Milton Winter, April 22, 2014.

[1149] See Robert Milton Winter, "Division and Reunion in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.: A Mississippi Retrospective," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (Spring 2000): 67-86.

PCUS Recognizes National Presbyterian Church

The 1974 General Assembly of the PCUS, meeting under the leadership of the Rev. Lawrence W. Bottoms, its first African American moderator, moved immediately to extend ecclesiastical recognition to the National Presbyterian Church, declaring, "We have not separated ourselves from the persons in these organizations; they have elected to separate themselves from us" and resolving that: "We affirm our acceptance of them as our brothers and sisters in Christ." The Assembly issued a pastoral letter stating that the National Presbyterian Church, *The Presbyterian Journal*, Concerned Presbyterians, and the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship should be recognized by members of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., as organizations "having interests contrary to the health and growth of this denomination. Rumors, comments and news stories circulated by persons identified with those groups should be acknowledged and understood as coming from sources whose own security and self-interest depend, in some measure, upon encouraging unhappiness and unfaithfulness among our members and our congregations." The new body equivocated as to whether it would recognize the PCUS as a true church or declare it apostate, though there were motions to do this on several occasions in its General Assemblies.[1150]

Continuing Racial Concerns

While PCA leaders insisted doctrinal considerations were paramount, some sociologists and historians have remarked that churches that initially withdrew to the PCA were almost always in areas where the majority of the population was African American and where whites had left the public schools. PCA churches were located along a so-called "Black Belt" (also termed by H. L. Mencken the "Bible Belt"), about 100 miles on either side of Interstate Highway 20 (from Greenville, South Carolina, through Atlanta, Georgia, to Montgomery, Alabama, and Jackson, Mississippi). Here the Southern Black population was concentrated and the resulting pressures were said to be most intense. The geographical concentration of the realigning churches was striking and could not be attributed simply to location. Mississippi had the largest number of realignments; neighboring Arkansas had almost none. The Rev. Flynn V. Long, Associate Stated Clerk of the PCUS, studied the "PCA-Black-Belt" phenomenon. He and others argued that the growing urbanization of the Upper South increased tension within the PCUS, leaving rural areas of the Deep South increasingly isolated, theologically conservative, and pro-segregationist, while the urban areas were more open to theological liberalism and racial integration. The situation had evolved over a century. Racial pressures were clearly a factor, but the role of seminaries and influential personalities were but two of the additional factors to be considered.[1151]

Clearly, several of those active in the planning or organization of the new denomination were outspoken segregationists. Among these were the Revs. John Reed Miller, John R. Richards, and Morton H. Smith. Others such as the Rev. Henry B. Dendy of *The Presbyterian Journal* and Hattiesburg ministers Edward Jussely and William J. Stanway believed that civil rights activism was a manifestation of theological liberalism. These men were hardly alone in their opinions, either in PCUS or emerging PCA circles.

The Rev. Frank J. Smith, a historian of the PCA, has noted that while some PCA founders were segregationists, the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church had adopted a racially inclusive policy. According to Smith, conservatives in the PCA cared about social issues but opposed actions and policies "that led

[1150] "Pastoral Letter Concerning the National Presbyterian Church," Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1974), 1:198-99; cf. Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1975), 1:126; *Presbyterian Outlook* (July 14, 1975): 9-10.

[1151] Flynn V. Long Jr., to R. Milton Winter, March 23, 1983; David M. Reimers, "The Race Problem and Presbyterian Union," 203-15; cf. Charles Reagan Wilson, ed. *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009): 168; *Presbyterian Outlook* (October 25, 1971): 10; (December 20, 1971): 2; (September 3, 1973): 9; R. Milton Winter, "Bible Belt," *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, J. D. Douglas, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 75-76; L. H. Whiteaker, "Review of *Religion and Race: Southern Presbyterians 1943-1983*, by Joel L. Alvis (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994)," *Journal of Mississippi History* 58 (Winter 1996): 42-26.

to socialism, communism, or subversion." He stated that an African American served on the planning committee for the first General Assembly.[1152]

The October 1969 "Declaration of Commitment," drafted in large part by the Rev. Donald B. Patterson, pastor of Jackson's First Church, and a leader in the organization of the PCA, had stated that, "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible Word of God, and that these Scriptures commit the Church to a mission whose primary end is the salvation and nurture of souls." It opposed any church union that would "weaken such a commitment." It also declared that the fruit of the Christian life was evidenced in love, concern, and neighborliness toward all races of men without partiality and without prejudice, especially to the poor, the oppressed, and the disadvantaged. The man of faith views all men as neighbors and himself as debtor, for Christ's sake." The session of Jackson's First Church had unanimously endorsed this document.

Still, Reformed Seminary theology professor Morton H. Smith's widely circulated book *"How Is the Gold Become Dim?"*[1153] *The Decline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as Reflected in its Assembly Actions*, commissioned and published by the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church on the eve of the division of the PCUS in 1973, contained Smith's assertion that segregation could be justified on the basis of scripture. He wrote that, "The fact is that slavery had been legislated in the Bible, and therefore the Presbyterians in the South refrained from condemning slavery as sinful. The same can be said of the matter of segregation. The fact is that God Himself segregated Israel from the Canaanites."[1154]

—photo from Reformed Seminary

The Rev. Morton H. Smith argued that racial segregation was not incompatible with biblical teaching. He served as Professor of Theology at Reformed Seminary and was Stated Clerk of the PCA.

No African American congregation initially joined the PCA. However, PCA historians such as Smith have cautioned against weighing racial concerns too heavily in outlining the causes for the conservative realignment from the PCUS, but these historians also acknowledge that it was a factor. Sean Michael Lucas has written his book, *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (2015), to confront the matter and place it in its proper context.

The matter of race relations or objection to the actions or legacy of civil rights leaders was by no means confined to the PCA. On January 15, 1974, the session of the First Church of Cleveland presented an overture to

[1152] Frank J. Smith, *History of the PCA*, 23, 101, 536, 541, 583-84, 608.

[1153] In the Book of Lamentations (4:1, KJV) "How is the gold become dim?" describes Jerusalem's former glory—its people, priests, and temple becoming tarnished and ruined due to sin and divine judgment, with noble figures now like broken pots and sacred stones scattered in the streets, showing a drastic fall from divine favor and splendor.

[1154] Morton H. Smith, *How is Thy Gold Become Dim*?, 153.

St. Andrew Presbytery protesting the PCUS General Executive Board's action requesting that church offices close on the birth date and in memory of the late, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., asserting that there was no established practice or policy for closing church offices in memory of any individual. The overture, with modification so as to remove reference to King, was approved and transmitted to the General Assembly. As late as the spring of 1992, St. Andrew Presbytery received a commissioner's resolution from elder William Fountain of the First Presbyterian Church in Greenville asking that the General Assembly declare Robert E. Lee's birthday an official holiday on the same day as Dr. King's birthday was observed.[1155]

Positive actions also were seen. The reorganized Presbytery of Central Mississippi invited the Rev. Lawrence W. Bottoms, moderator of the 1974 General Assembly, and its first African American moderator, to visit the presbytery. He spoke November 4, 1974, at Briarwood Church and on the following day at Trinity Church in Meridian.[1156]

The Rev. William H. Jones, pastor of Jackson's Faith Church, was the first African American to serve as moderator of Central Mississippi Presbytery, October 16, 1975. Meetings of the presbytery were also hosted by its African American congregations, such as on October 26, 1978, when it convened at the Alexander Memorial Church in Kosciusko and on July 19, 1984, when it met at Pilgrim Grove Church in Newton. The presbytery made special effort to meet in its small churches, its new churches and, in several cases, in congregations that had experienced trouble. Two African American ministers, educated at Reformed Seminary, were received as candidates and subsequently ordained by Central Mississippi Presbytery. The Rev. Albert W. Bell served Alexander Memorial Church in Kosciusko. The Rev. Eugene A. Thompson served Pilgrim Grove Church near Newton.[1157]

In 1979, after some Ku Klux Klan activity surfaced in the area, the Synod of the Mid-South adopted a resolution declaring "strong opposition to the racism and violence symbolized by the Ku Klux Klan," and calling on all Presbyterians to oppose those "who promote and feed upon racial hatred and fear of violence as means of achieving their goals." That winter, in response to an overture from Christ's Community Church in Clinton, Central Mississippi Presbytery took note of an increasingly visible activity on the part of racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis, as well as the Republic of New Africa and Black Muslims, and declared that the Christian Gospel "is clearly antithetical to the racism and violence which these organizations advocate."[1158]

Work for Racial Reconciliation and to Meet Human Need Under New PCUSA

The women of the new synod continued to work for interracial understanding. In 1985, the Alabama-Mississippi Women's Conference was held for the first time at the predominately African American Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with Mrs. Mary Ellen Alexander of Long Beach, Mississippi, serving as director. The Mississippi women worked to raise money for a new center for continuing education at Columbia Seminary, which was named in honor of the Rev. Cecil A. Thompson, former pastor of Jackson's Central Presbyterian Church.[1159]

Central Mississippi Presbytery gave financial support to many different helping agencies within its bounds, including the Good Samaritan Center of Jackson, Voice of Calvary Ministries of Jackson and Mendenhall, and the Synod of the Mid-South's Hunger Action Program. By action of the presbytery, the Rev. William H. Jones gave one quarter of his time to service with the Hunger Action Program, working to alleviate the relentless poverty that affected so many in the African American neighborhoods of Jackson and surrounding communities. The Rev. William O. Lowrey traveled to Africa with a Presbyterian Hunger Program team.[1160]

St. Andrew Presbytery's first female elder commissioner to the General Assembly was Mary R. Ballot of

[1155] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 15, 1974): 9-10; (February 4, 1992): 39.
[1156] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (April 18, 1974): 19; (October 17, 1974): 23.
[1157] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (July 17, 1980): 21; (October 16, 1980): 10-11.
[1158] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (October 16, 1979): 28; (January 17, 1980): 37.
[1159] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 16, 1984): 8.
[1160] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 16, 1975): 26; (April 21, 1977): 12-15.

Bethel Church near Grenada in 1973. Mrs. Mary E. Miller of Greenfield Church, near Waterford, attended the PCUS General Assembly at Charlotte, North Carolina, (1975) as St. Andrew Presbytery's first ethnic minority advisory participant. Its first African American female Assembly commissioner was Helen Scruggs, also of Greenfield Church, in 1978.

Perhaps the first female commissioner to be enrolled in Central Mississippi Presbytery was Mrs. Myra English, an elder from the small predominately African American Pilgrim Grove Church near Newton. She attended the meeting of October 19, 1972, at St. Paul Church in Jackson and represented her church's session on many subsequent occasions.

As innocent as the matter might seem to later readers, installation of the Rev. Joe Rigsby, an African American pastor, at Hattiesburg's Preston Chapel, July 28, 1974, by a white commission of South Mississippi Presbytery was remarkable, as it implied social and religious fraternization between white and Black persons and the bestowal of a position of leadership and equality upon a black person. Rigsby went on to hold many positions of leadership in the presbytery, representing it at the General Assembly and serving also a term as the presbytery's moderator. In subsequent years, African American presbyters served on installation commissions for white pastors.[1161]

—Presbyterian Voice.

The Rev. Joe Rigsby headed racial-ethnic ministries for South Mississippi Presbytery. He was instrumental in the organization of Hattiesburg's Pineview Church.

Mississippi Presbyterianism's first African American moderator of presbytery was the Rev. Anthony S. Armstrong, retired pastor of Greenfield Presbyterian Church in St. Andrew Presbytery, September 21, 1976. Some years later, Lucimarian and Lawrence Roberts (parents of ABC newscaster Robin Roberts) were the first African American members of the Presbyterian Church at Bay St. Louis. Both Lucimarian and Larry Roberts served as elders in the congregation, and upon the nomination of his pastor, the Rev. Dwyn Milton Mounger, Lawrence Roberts was elected the first Black moderator of Mississippi Presbytery (PCUSA) on April 22, 1994, also serving as a commissioner to the General Assembly and as vice-moderator of the General Assembly Council.[1162]

The Rev. Belinda M. Curry, a daughter of the Greenfield Church near Waterford, was the first African American woman to be ordained to the ministry by St. Andrew Presbytery, June 1, 1997.[1163]

For many years, the Rev. John T. N. Keels served South Mississippi Presbytery as Executive Secretary for Church Extension. Keels served from 1961 to 1977; he had served the old Meridian Presbytery in the same

[1161] Minutes of South Mississippi Presbytery (July 16, 1974): 16; (January 20, 1976): 5; (January 16, 1979): 21.

[1162] *Presbyterian Voice* 15 (December 2004): 11.

[1163] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (February 4, 1997): 18.

capacity from 1958 to 1960. Following retirement, Keels gave his Sundays to many of the presbytery's smallest congregations, including the African American Gavin's Chapel near Bay Springs.

In 1978, the Rev. Richard O. Knott, former pastor of Jackson's Briarwood Church, was called as mission director for Central Mississippi Presbytery. His work was concentrated in the development of two new congregations in the Jackson suburbs: the Presidential Hills and Emmanuel Churches. Central Mississippi Presbytery, along with its neighbor in South Mississippi, recognized its need to broaden its outreach. In 1985, the churches of Central Mississippi Presbytery claimed 4,935 communicants, of which 2,778 (56.3%) were women and 183 (3.7%) were African American.[1164]

Expanding the Church's Ministry with African Americans

During this period, a significant transition was made as white Presbyterians spoke of ministry with African Americans instead of ministry to or for them. Several small African American congregations were located in South Mississippi Presbytery in the Hattiesburg-Heidelberg area, including Gavin's Chapel, Fairview, and Preston Chapel—the largest concentration of African American Presbyterian churches in the state. The Rev. Joe Rigsby, an African American and pastor at Preston Chapel, did much to strengthen these churches and chapels. On January 20, 1970, he reported that each of the chapels now had a session and diaconate. The presbytery met at Gavin's Chapel, one of the small congregations Rigsby served, July 17, 1984.[1165]

In 1975, the session and diaconate of the J. J. White Church in McComb, along with the First Church of Laurel, joined forces to help erect a new house of worship for Fairview Church, a small African American congregation near Heidelberg. The McComb Church committed itself to pay two-thirds of the cost of the new building, and the First Church of Laurel also contributed. The new church was dedicated April 25, 1976.[1166]

In the spring of 1976, plans were announced to relocate Preston Chapel, the long-standing African American congregation in Hattiesburg to a new site. The congregation was renamed Pineview Presbyterian Church. Rigsby continued to serve as pastor.[1167]

Like Central Mississippi Presbytery, South Mississippi Presbytery also supported the predominately African American Voice of Calvary Ministry's outreach in rural Simpson County.[1168]

During the mid- and later 1970s, the Central Presbytery devoted great effort to assisting the three African American congregations it had received from the former Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery, also working to develop and expand its outreach to the area's African American population with new churches and other types of ministry. The work was distinguished from that of former periods in that it was collegial, with African American ministers, elders, and congregants recognized as equals—though due to the poverty of many African Americans, the work was heavily subsidized. For example, on October 17, 1974, the Rev. C. Phil Esty, pastor of Jackson's Covenant Church and chair of the presbytery's Committee on Christian Mission, reported on the success of Faith Church's Children's Center, which had brought a 30% increase in membership to the small African American congregation in West Jackson. In 1973, the center had operated at full capacity with 72 pupils, a professional director, four teachers, and other operational staff. The program was under the general oversight of the congregation's pastor, the Rev. W. H. Jones.[1169]

[1164] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 19, 1978): 32; (January 17, 1980): 36; (October 16, 1980): 1; (January 15, 1981): 25-27; (April 18, 1985): 10.

[1165] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 20, 1970): 25-27.

[1166] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (July 15, 1975): 29; (April 19-20, 1976): 21.

[1167] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (April 19-20, 1976): 21-24; (October 18, 1977): 41-43.

[1168] Minutes of St. Andrew Presbytery (January 17, 1978): 23.

[1169] Minutes of Central Mississippi Presbytery (October 17, 1974): 17.

Harvest of an Anxious Autumn: PCUSA Becomes a Minority Among Mississippi Presbyterians

Historian Samuel S. Hill, Jr. wrote in 1999 that, "Change—dramatic, basic, overarching change is today's ranking fact. Everywhere old moorings are breaking loose, deeply entrenched attitudes are being shaken, and traditional patterns of social life are gradually giving way and being replaced by new." Churches were caught up in these changes, even those that resisted or which chose not to acknowledge that they were remarkably different than they had been a generation before. This was in part because new categories of thought in science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, geology, history, and politics could not be prevented from influencing people's thinking, even if they were introduced through other forums than the churches. As Hill said, "The passing of the old culture spelled the decline of the culture-religion spawned in it and so closely tied to it." As the 21st century dawned, the Mississippi Presbyterians found themselves enveloped in such change. Ideas, social forces, longstanding customs, political alliances, and human groupings shifted like a kaleidoscope. These changes confronted the Church as well, and caused intense anxiety for many.[1170]

In particular, the advent of popular and inexpensive methods of birth control revolutionized the lives of both married women as well as sexually interested young people. The ability to avoid pregnancy and control the size of families not only resulted in the delay of the average age for marriage, but also allowed freer enjoyment of sexual relations without fear of an unplanned pregnancy. Katherine Dexter McCormick, an heiress of the Chicago Presbyterian industrialist Cyrus McCormick's vast fortune, who financed most of the research that led to the birth control pill, expressed the thought in this way: "The sex drive in humans," she said, "was so strong, that it was critical that it be separated from reproductive functions." Perhaps no other single invention so transformed the lives of Presbyterians and almost everyone else in this era.[1171]

Still, the inherently conservative nature of Southern religion held sway. Few in the religious sphere sought or embraced change. Even those who boasted of experimental or "contemporary" worship or eschewed a conventional church building often claimed to offer "the old-time gospel." Hill saw change affecting many Southern institutions and way, many—except the Church—which continued to see its role as the "conservator of the southern way of life."[1172]

Other observers believed that the Church's influence was ambiguous. It could appeal to the conscience, but ideas put forward in position papers, as propounded by national assemblies, however carefully considered, seldom found their way into the thinking of the laity. Most parish clergy remained timid about arguing on behalf of denominational positions on divisive matters, especially if these were likely to challenge local viewpoints. Presbyterians remained a middle-class church. In the South as elsewhere, the poor, both Black and white, were more likely to be ecclesiastically dispossessed. Many believed that those who had little were those who made no effort to help themselves. There was also indication that the better-educated stratum of society was less likely to be religiously involved, as were the very wealthy. The gap between haves and have-nots widened again in the 1980s, perpetuating an economic situation in Mississippi that resembled some countries of Central America.

Mississippi had become a state politically divided by race. In a reversal of the early 20th century pattern, most whites supported the Republican Party, and African Americans, now empowered with the ballot, tended to vote Democratic. In 2004, the state elected Haley Barbour, a Presbyterian from Yazoo City, as governor. While serving his two terms in office, the Barbours worshiped in Jackson's First Presbyterian Church. Prior to his election as

[1170] The title for this chapter is inspired by the opening lines of a Thanksgiving poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, published in *The Saturday Evening Post* (November 25, 1950): "Hard, hard it is, this anxious autumn/To lift the heavy mind from its dark forebodings;/To sit at the bright feast, and with ruddy cheer/Give thanks for the harvest of a troubled year." Millay ends the poem with hope for the future: "From the apprehensive present, from a future packed/With unknown dangers, monstrous, terrible and new/Let us turn for comfort to this simple fact:/We have been in trouble before . . . and we came through." Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 5, 18.

[1171] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard, 1993): 604.

[1172] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 180.

governor, Barbour was chair of the Republican National Committee and was influential in national conservative political movements. Some of the state's politicians, members of both political parties, continued to appeal to racial prejudices in subtle, divisive ways. The legacy of the White Citizens' Councils was troubling. Over time, its leadership moderated somewhat, so that the Council of Conservative Citizens, as it came to be called, presented itself as an organization to advocate conservative political positions. Some of its stances, such as opposition to welfare, food assistance, and affirmative action programs, were seen by critics as racist. There was strong resentment among the white middle class toward federal programs that helped people whom many labeled as lazy or undeserving.

Some noted that the culture wars spoken of by politicians had spilled over into the churches, as religious persons became increasingly divided along political and ideological lines. The trials of Mississippi Presbyterians in this period were paralleled in other communions, such as the Southern Baptist, where the arguments were often more vocal. Yet, Presbyterians were the only Mississippi communion that suffered withdrawals of entire congregations because of ideological and theological controversy. The PCUSA experienced further withdrawals during this period because of disagreement with denominational policies and positions. At least three PCA congregations also withdrew from that communion because of dissent from denominational positions.

By 1990, many Mississippi churches had largely turned inward. Prior to and including the 1960s, churches had an outward focus, with preaching and programs that were evangelistic and mission-minded. As Samuel S. Hill saw it, "The churches were reaching out. . . . Their overtures were to individuals, men and women in need of hearing the Christian message of personal salvation. . . . They were totally committed to winning the world for Christ." Though most Mississippi churches did not embrace what were called "social justice" concerns, the focus was nonetheless toward the outsider. There was an almost single-hearted focus on what was considered to be the most important matter any individual could face, the transformation of the sin-cursed soul, so that the redeemed person could "go to heaven." Presbyterians, to be sure, proceeded to this task with what Hill called, "a certain modesty of pronouncement," with trust that one was forgiven and embraced by God without dwelling over-much on the personal details of one's conversion.[1173]

The message, as disseminated by all Protestant churches, was that pardon from sin and deliverance from its consequences after death was granted to those who trusted Christ, as well as the ethical corollary, purity of personal morality. The churches saw the prosecution of this task as their exclusive mandate and were so fixated upon it that almost all their work could be comprehended under the heads of home and foreign missions. Except for the teaching of children, nothing else greatly mattered. Although not all Mississippians belonged to a church or were active in its work, scarcely any openly dissented from the basic tenets of this religious understanding.

Churches readily acknowledged that they existed for the sake of others. Additions to buildings were justified on the basis of new members who might be served. Prayers were offered for the sake of those who had not heard the gospel's message in lands far removed. A church that "looked inward" was said to be near death. Opposition to the civil rights and peace movements was justified because it distracted from the Church's evangelistic responsibility. Meanwhile, sin continued to be seen primarily in terms of personal peccadilloes. Sexual promiscuity, profanity, alcohol abuse, gambling, and the like were, to most, the substance of immorality. Such characterizations of evil primarily as worldly pleasure doubtless had the unintentional effect of encouraging the unconverted to delay a religious commitment.[1174]

Hill described the situation among Southern religious conservatives in this way:

> The Bible-loving churchman discerns no social ethical concerns in the Christianity of Jesus or Paul, since neither is explicitly reported to have lifted a finger to eradicate slavery in the Roman Empire, to foment political change in Palestine, or to advocate society's amelioration of the living conditions of the poor. Accordingly, the southern church argues, Christian congregations have neither example nor

[1173] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, liv, lvi.

[1174] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, lxv-lxvi; 14, 16, 107.

> instruction impelling them to forsake their soul-winning duties in the interest of so nebulous a task as Christianizing the social order. Absorption in efforts of this kind only serves to dilute the authentic Christian responsibility. There is no time for the church to engage in general civilizing activities when lost souls languish in darkness and despair.

That churches were called to involve themselves in issues of human fairness or to address matters of economic disparity seemed an alien concept—a focus on the things of the present world when entry upon the life to come was all-important. To be fair, Presbyterian ministers had been given almost no training in ways to mediate social change and, except for a few outspoken professors in the seminaries or the church press, to educate and persuade local church members, as to the need and imperative for such activity and concern. In a religious community that prized stability and order, activism offered the prospect of much that could be lost with little to be gained, for most white Presbyterians in the society that was Mississippi-occupied places of relative social comfort and great economic privilege.[1175]

The Southern Church's evangelistic message, its preoccupation with contending for the biblical mode of baptism, "the proper form of church government," arguments over questions of divine sovereignty and human freedom, the relation of individual congregations to their ecclesiastical authorities, as well as the nature and authority of the biblical text itself—these concerns seemed to resonate less and less with unchurched persons—who were increasingly unaware of such matters, but when pressed, often said they saw no relation between the Church's claims and the problems in living they faced. This "failure to connect" was increasingly troubling and was often met with superficial efforts that yielded little success.

Some intuited that the Christian faith was richer than it had been represented to them. There was dissatisfaction, especially among college students, with the reductionism of the Christian message as proclaimed by some denominations and para-church campus ministries. While many rejected religious commitment, they did so not out of sheer recalcitrance, believing moral values they held, such as tolerance and inclusiveness, to be more important than the truth-claims espoused by the Church. As in every generation, many were repelled by the hypocrisy and malfeasance of individual Christians.[1176]

For their part, churches in the 1990s, when confronted by difficult external matters, often retreated into discussions of internal organization, theological argument, and discussions of sexual ethics. Many were also confronted by serious financial challenges as the average age of church members began a steady increase.

Closure of Mary Holmes College

A gift from the Walton Foundation, established by Sam and Helen Walton, of Bentonville, Arkansas—Presbyterian entrepreneurs who had gained wealth through their chain of Wal-Mart stores—made possible the erection of a new library for Mary Holmes College in 1995. Still, despite financial assistance from the General Assembly, government, assistance, and the gifts of private individuals, financial difficulties overtook the college, and the small historically Black school closed in 2004. African Americans, like other Mississippians, turned increasingly to state-supported institutions for higher education. The church colleges that remained developed specialized programs to attract students and stressed a generalized evangelical or religious commitment, if any was mentioned at all.[1177]

[1175] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 112.

[1176] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 179.

[1177] Inez Moore Parker, *The Rise and Decline of the Program of Education for Black Presbyterians of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1865-1970* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977); Kristin Searfoss, "GAC Approves Financial Package to Aid Mary Holmes College," *Presbyterian Voice* 9 (November 1998): 10; Evan Silverstein, "Mary Holmes College Won't Open This Fall," *Presbyterian Voice* 14 (October 2003): 3; "Historic Mary Holmes College Closes," *Presbyterian Voice* 16 (April 2005): 3; see Alice W. Brown, "Mary Holmes College," in *Cautionary Tales: Strategy Lessons from Struggling Colleges* (Sterling, Va.: Stylus Publishing, 2012): 79-92.

Although both the PCA and PCUSA made efforts at new church development, membership in both communions declined in roughly equal percentages, and though individual congregations prospered, overall giving to all causes in both communions remained high. Many factors were involved in this change, yet it could not be denied that much positive energy had been consumed in the protracted ecclesiastical controversies.

The Presbyterian Church's Mississippi diversity was modest. For example, in 2008, the PCUSA's Presbytery of Mississippi reported that its congregations reported leadership being provided by 175 male elders, 113 female elders, 43 male deacons, and 62 female deacons. With respect to ethnic composition, sessions reported 15 members of Asian background, 154 African American, 6 Hispanic, 3 Native American, and 4,240 members of Caucasian ancestry. Three of the state's small African American congregations were dissolved, including Community in Itta Bena (1971) and Presidential Hills in Jackson (1989). The Garden of Eden Church at Okolona was dissolved in 2013.[1178]

Toward a Season of New Hope

Historians have only recently begun to remark upon the degree to which most Southern whites of the early 21st century had moderated their racial views from a position of strict segregation to one of integration, acceptance and, in some instances, cooperation. The change in Southern white racial attitudes was seen as one of the most dramatic reorientations of public opinion in American history.

Mississippi's whites were long regarded as the most recalcitrant of Southern segregationists, and many of the state's political leaders catered to the views of the most conservative citizens, as did many of the white clergy. The state was called a "closed society," and a few of the state's most prominent ministers were outspoken in its defense. Some leaders of white churches were seen as protectors of an "orthodoxy of segregation," but the reluctance of most to embrace a full-throated doctrine of mass resistance and white supremacy may have helped undermine racist views and segregation. The part played by white church people (both members and ministers), especially those in the Presbyterian Church, U.S., having been examined by historians of the civil rights movement, revealed a slow and poorly coordinated effort but, nonetheless, a modest resolve to change. The effort was complicated by many other issues—doctrinal and organizational—issues that, when taken together, splintered the Presbyterians of Mississippi into separate denominations.

Voting patterns gave some indication of public attitudes. The state gave its popular vote in overwhelming numbers to George W. Bush in the elections of 2000 and 2004. (Bush was reared in the First Presbyterian Church of Midland, Texas.) When Barack Obama was elected in 2008, surveys revealed that he received only 15% of the ballots cast by white Mississippi voters. The state's alignment was overwhelmingly Republican; moreover, the Mississippi Democratic and Republican parties were divided almost entirely along racial lines. The nation's first African American president was a member of the United Church of Christ—a close ecumenical neighbor of the PCUSA, a body represented in Mississippi by historically Black Tougaloo College—an early seat of civil rights activism in the state.

Mississippi's congruity with American society cannot be judged simply by racial factors. Other considerations such as rates of poverty, quality of education, opportunities for women, and support for sexual minorities enter in. In the first decade of the new millennium, the state continued to have the largest representation per capita in church membership, with the majority of these members adhering to strongly evangelical bodies. It also had the largest per capita number of citizens in prison, as well as the largest number of teenage pregnancies. The PCUSA faced particular challenges as few of its Mississippi members and leaders openly advocated for the policies of their General Assembly.

While many parts of the South, such as Nashville, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Orlando, Birmingham, or the cities of North Carolina's research corridor, experienced rapid population growth, large parts of Mississippi, including its capital, experienced population loss. A report by the Manpower Development Corporation observed that, "The

[1178] Minutes of Mississippi Presbytery (May 15, 2008).

sunshine on the Sunbelt has proved to be a narrow beam of light, brightening futures along the Atlantic Seaboard, and in large cities, but skipping over many small towns and rural areas." Mississippi found itself entitled to fewer seats in Congress, and the presbyteries of the PCUSA were apportioned fewer commissioners to the General Assembly. In areas where growth did occur, the growth, in terms of both population numbers and average income, was not proportional to the growth in other parts of the South.[1179]

The outmigration of Mississippians continued as better-educated whites joined the long-standing exodus of African Americans. A high percentage of the state's college and university students sought work in other states after graduation. By the 1960s, as a result of its "Balance Agriculture with Industry Program," Mississippi had attracted some low-wage, low-skilled industry as large corporations sought non-union workers and the low tax incentives offered by Southern states. Still, many companies bypassed the state, or at least many of its smaller towns, because of the prevalence of substandard schools and troubled race relations. As time went on, many of these corporations moved their operations to Latin America and Asia. The state's unemployment rate remained well above the national average. In 2015, Mississippi's unemployment rate was the second highest in the nation. In some locales, 65% of the population derived their only or principal income from government checks. Religious congregations grew smaller and were often noticeably older than in previous generations.

In many ways, churches continued to display defensive postures infused with cultural pessimism. Worldwide exposures of financial corruption, sexual abuse, and violent extremism tarred public perception of religious people and institutions. Many came to view churches as self-righteous and intolerant, as condemning what they believed to be the sins of others, but complacent in their own. Theology was held in low esteem, seen as sectarian and self-justifying, especially as churches became identified with politics. In an increasingly pluralistic world, persons outside the Church believed they could address difficult problems in a more thoughtful and generous way than could the churches, whose scripture was seen by many as limiting, not extending their focus of concern.

The more liberal churches sought to regain credibility through humanitarian and philanthropic work. Presbyterians ministered, albeit with diminished numbers in most communities, in some instances attracting recognition for their work. Areas of involvement included disaster relief, water purification installations and new approaches to campus ministry.

As African Americans and whites moved toward greater understanding and acceptance of one another, old segregation patterns gradually melted at historically Presbyterian educational institutions and entities across Mississippi. Camp Hopewell, French Camp Academy, and Palmer Home early embraced racial diversity and the human reconciliation this brought. African American students from various denominations enrolled at Reformed Seminary.[1180]

African Americans participated in the work of the PCUSA presbyteries and synod, and some congregations began to exhibit some racial diversity. Churches did not lead the way in the blurring of racial lines, but most were no longer actively opposed. Private schools operated by Presbyterian churches now admitted students without regard to race, though only a limited number of African Americans chose to enroll their children in these schools. In 2012, the General Assemblies of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America—the former, historically white and the latter—predominately African American—voted to form a Unification Task Force.

[1179] *MDC Panel on Rural Economic Development, Shadows in the Sunbelt: Developing the Rural South in an Era of Economic Change* (Chapel Hill: MDC, Inc., 1986), cited in Charles C. Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 250.

[1180] Just as a PCUSA-Cumberland Presbyterian tie developed in Mississippi, so also there was friendship between PCA and A.R.P. churches in the state, as A.R.P. churches turned to Reformed Seminary for pastors. PCUSA presbyteries sent candidates for the ministry to Memphis Theological Seminary of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church which had several PCUSA professors.

PCA Apologizes for Slavery, Racism, and Oppression

Change also came to the PCA. In a landmark action in the summer of 2002 and paralleled by Southern Baptists in 2009, the General Assembly of the PCA adopted a resolution confessing the sins that "we and our fathers" had committed in the practice of slavery, racism, and oppression, seeking the forgiveness of brothers and sisters "for the reticence of our hearts that have constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter." The action was of great significance for Presbyterians and occasioned world-wide notice and appreciation from a wide variety of religious leaders. The action was widely seen as a positive step forward, opening a way for wider work by the PCA, not only in the American South, but also around the world.

Whatever influence they may have had, the views about race expressed by PCA founder and longtime stated clerk, the Rev. Morton H. Smith in 1964, and as they were published by the Steering Committee to form a Continuing Presbyterian Church in 1973, did not prevail. In 2002, after the apology for slavery was passed, Smith told an interviewer that he thought the action resulted from a "program to abandon the Southern roots from which the majority of the PCA has come, which goes counter to the founding of the denomination as a Continuing Southern Presbyterian Church." He asked, "How can men who were descendants of Northerners vote for the repentance of the South? It should have been only the people that were descendants of Southerners that should have been asked to make that sort of repentance."

Smith assented to the interviewer's suggestion that older PCUS conservative criticism of the civil rights movement was that the movement "was itself a manifestation of liberalism—that the civil rights movement was a product of liberalism. He stated that he did not consider himself a racist, defining a racist as "one who hates another race." Smith defended his conception of segregation as a social arrangement (which specified that both races be treated equally), and said that he saw biblical grounds for segregation of the races through God's sending Israel into Egypt where they were segregated by the Egyptians because they were shepherds," concluding, that, "I think the idea of the segregation of races is actually found in the Bible."

Smith followed his interviewer's suggestion that some who helped organize the PCA had failed, as his interviewer suggested, "to grasp the theological and philosophical problems inherent in the so-called civil rights movement." Smith responded, "I think that probably is true. It is true that there was a mixing of social conservatism with theological conservatism in the forming of the PCA, and there were people who saw social conservatism defending the structures of the Old South as being part of the whole movement." But Smith insisted that "we as a denomination, and we theologians, never spoke to that in that way."[1181]

A few opposed the resolution. The Rev. Eugene C. Case, stated clerk of Grace Presbytery and pastor of the church at Woodville, Mississippi, rose at the 2002 Assembly to ask that the declaration be postponed indefinitely, stating that he opposed the overture, "because of the implicit attack on the reputations of godly 19th century churchmen such as James Smylie, Charles Colcock Jones, and John L. Girardeau," whom Case said, "ministered effectively to blacks in antebellum days." A large majority of the commissioners believed the apology was in order. The chair of the Committee on Bills and Overtures at the 2002 Assembly was the Rev. J. Ligon Duncan, pastor of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church, who stated that, "My heart was changed. My sins were challenged."[1182]

Older Conservatives Had Equated Support for Segregation with Strict Adherence to Bible

Through its action, the PCA Assembly dealt with one of the complex issues that contributed to its formation. It was a happenstance of history, certainly an irony, that many leaders to whom conservative Mississippi Presbyterians looked with respect (because they upheld the doctrine of biblical inerrancy and other conservative tenets of the faith)—men such as William Childs Robinson, J. Gresham Machen, L. Nelson Bell, G. T. Gillespie, and Morton H. Smith—were also segregationists. Indeed, it was also the case that many who condemned racism

[1181] *Presbyterian & Reformed Presbyterian & Reformed News* 8 *News* 8 (July-September 2002): 4, 14-15.

[1182] *Presbyterian & Reformed Presbyterian & Reformed News* 8 *News* 8 (July-September 2002): 4, 14-15.

were also those who had embraced biblical higher criticism and Neo-Orthodox theology—a theology that conservatives in the PCUS equated with liberalism.

It may fairly be questioned as to whether the matter of race relations was actually decided by appeal to the scriptures, for there were those with an inerrantist theology of scripture, such as Princeton's Benjamin Warfield, who favored African American equality. In the Presbyterian pulpits of the American South, a critique of segregation was usually the most identifiable divergence that could be observed between the preaching of a person who held to a Neo-Orthodox understanding of scripture and a person who held a more conservative position, a fact that caused many conservatives to draw the conclusion that one's view of segregation was determined by the theology of biblical authority one held.

Indeed, the Rev. Harry S. Hassall, longtime director of the Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians, an evangelical caucus in the PCUS, stated on many occasions that he had graduated from seminary before he knew a theological conservative who was not also a segregationist. The situation caused some who grew up in fundamentalist settings, not only to leave the state, but also to give up orthodoxy and, in a few cases, even faith itself, when they became convinced that racism was a sin.[1183]

Movements Toward Inter-Racial Cooperation

As Southerners became more accepting of and comfortable with racially integrated situations, segregation policies in white-controlled churches were set aside or repealed, and several Presbyterian congregations in Mississippi moved toward inter-racial cooperation and worship. For example, under the leadership of the Rev. Jonathan Kelley, Bethel Presbyterian Church in Olive Branch united with nearby Fairview Presbyterian Church, an African American congregation, using Bethel's facilities for worship and retaining the Fairview Church for occasional use.

College towns were especially amenable to interracial gatherings. By the account of the Rev. Michael McLaughlin, First Presbyterian of Cleveland, as it entered its second century of service, "welcomed its first, its second, then its third African American members." Cleveland was home to Delta State University. The First Church in Oxford also welcomed African American and Asian members, as did the small Byhalia Church in western Marshall County. The University of Mississippi attracted many international students, some of whom participated in the church's campus ministry activities.[1184]

Important movement toward interracial understanding and cooperation also occurred among some of Mississippi's social and religious conservatives. Since the 1970s, national and international evangelical leaders such as Ron Sider, John R. W. Stott, Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, as well as John Perkins of the Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mississippi, sought to convince fellow evangelicals that social justice was an indispensable dimension of Christian discipleship.

In the early 1990s, spurred by a group of its young adults, Jackson's historic First Presbyterian Church began important reconciliation efforts with the city's African American community. In 1993, a cooperative interracial organization called Mission Mississippi began work in Jackson. After several false starts, First Presbyterian, under the leadership of its pastor, the Rev. James M. Baird, gave strong financial and leadership support to Mission Mississippi. Mission Mississippi's efforts, as *The Jackson Clarion-Ledger* described them were, "to break down the walls that divide us by race and denominational backgrounds." Set to "change Mississippi one relationship at a time," the group organized prayer breakfasts, religious services, and other public events where white and African American Christians could "sit down together, eat together, talk together, and pray together: actions unthinkable in the Mississippi of the 1960s."[1185]

Prior to the launch of Mission Mississippi, Jim Baird had joined African American pastor, the Rev. James

[1183] Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Roc*k, 409; *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:488-91, 51-18.

[1184] Michael D. McLaughlin to Milton Winter, April 24, 2016.

[1185] Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* (January 16, 1993).

Washington, to form a group of white and Black ministers, which had been quietly gathering each month for conversation and prayer. This group had been meeting since the mid-1980s. Also participating was the Rev. Joe Rightmyer, the evangelical pastor of Jackson's Covenant Presbyterian Church.

Mission Mississippi's subsequent work was chronicled by Peter Slade in a book *Open Friendship in a Closed Society* (2009). Slade offered that true friendship included a desire for justice. He cited a 2004 comment of John Perkins that, "individuals cannot change institutions, only institutions change institutions," asking, therefore, "What hope does that leave the poor for changing Mississippi?" Perkins believed that the Church was "the institution that God left here on earth. . . . It is God's force on earth, and that force is to challenge all other institutions."[1186]

Later, the Rev. J. Ligon Duncan, Baird's successor as pastor of Jackson's First Church, and later chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary, as well as the Rev. Sean Michael Lucas, pastor of Hattiesburg's First Presbyterian Church and a professor at Reformed Seminary, worked with an organization called the Gospel Coalition, representing the PCA in conversations that attempted to find "a theological center" for the wider evangelical movement's social justice work. These efforts were to have important results.[1187]

In 2004, the PCA General Assembly approved a pastoral letter, "The Gospel and Race," following upon the actions of 2002. Identifying racism as one of America's national sins, it said:

> We therefore confess our covenantal involvement in these national sins. As a people, both we and our fathers have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws our God has commanded. We therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts, which has constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.
>
> As a people, we pledge to work hard, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries. . . .

In 2005, an inter-racial PCA congregation called Redeemer Church was organized with significant financial assistance from Jackson's First Church at the site of the former Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCA), which had followed its congregation to a new location in the city's northern suburbs along Old Canton Road. Redeemer Church, located in a neighborhood that was once mostly white but now racially mixed, called co-pastors, one white and one African American. The church intentionally sought to invite and welcome persons of all races to its worshiping community.[1188]

Speaking at the tenth anniversary of Redeemer Church, Ligon Duncan said,

> In all candor, we need to pause and ask, what happened here? What happened to make First Presbyterian, Jackson so committed to multi-ethnic ministry and so thrilled at what God is doing here at Redeemer? What caused a church that was known in the 1950s as a bastion of segregationism to become so desirous of seeing a multi-ethnic PCA church in Jackson, and of being inclusive itself (you should know that during my pastorate at First, I had the privilege of baptizing the first African American new members of First Church, both adults and children, in over 100 years)? Now friends, I am a son of the old Southern Presbyterian Church. These are my people, and I am no better than my fathers. It is humiliating to stand before you today and confess these things. So, what happened? What accounts for this change, and for our present joy in you? Well, the answer is complex, and many things could be said."

[1186] Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society*, 42, 45-47, 75, 83, 86-93; cf. Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

[1187] Lucas, *Blessed* Zion, 172.

[1188] Lucas, *Blessed* Zion, 172.

Then Duncan told how, in the early 1970s, the elders of First Church were meeting together at a retreat at the church's Twin Lakes Camp and Conference Center. They discussed the segregation issue and said, "We were wrong. The church, this church, is for all God's people, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight." From that day, said Duncan, "we have been moving forward, working and praying for a future of our church, and for the PCA churches of this city, and indeed for the whole denomination, that is inclusive and diverse."[1189]

Christ Fellowship, a new PCA congregation in Horn Lake, was also intentionally interracial. Located in a mixed-race neighborhood, the church sought to live out the intentions of St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all ONE IN CHRIST Jesus" (their emphasis). According to their webpage, "Christ Fellowship wants to be a church that is so committed to the unifying Gospel of Jesus that everyone in our community will know us by our love for one another—regardless of ethnicity, social status, age, or gender."[1190]

Churches in smaller towns also did intentional work to bring worshipers together across racial lines. Clarksdale's historically white First Presbyterian Church also began an outreach to African Americans. In 2015, the Rev. Mark Webb, an African American minister, was called as the congregation's assistant pastor and minister of outreach. The town of Clarksdale was a distressed community, with high rates of poverty, crime, and population decline. (The community had lost nearly one-third of its population since 1970.) Both the town's Presbyterian and Episcopal congregations became interracial, with African American and white Christians working to address the serious challenges the small city faced. As Will Campbell had predicted, this "conscious decision" to put the Church's "house in order" came not from radical reformers but from within conservative evangelical Christianity.[1191]

But Jackson's First Church did even more. Through the years, a number of Presbyterian churches throughout the state had relocated for various reasons, leaving historic locations in the downtown areas of their communities to new locations on the periphery. Among such were the First Churches at Cleveland, Corinth, Greenville, Hattiesburg, and Kosciusko. The First Church of Jackson, after its 1950 move northward a few blocks from downtown, decided to stay in the city where it anchored the historic Belhaven neighborhood. With the exodus of most of Jackson's white population to suburban areas, there was conversation in the congregation about moving to the growing northern suburbs. However, it decided to remain at its highly visible North State Street location. The church interpreted its current existence to be that of a city church and gradually shifted its ministry to accord with that understanding of its mission. It also gave financial assistance to several daughter churches in the suburban areas.[1192]

The First Presbyterian Church of Hattiesburg also engaged in efforts to develop interracial friendship and partnership. In 2006, the congregation partnered with Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, an African American congregation. The partnership, called Hope for Hattiesburg, rebuilt homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina, bringing members of both churches and their different neighborhoods for fellowship and service.[1193]

In Memphis, the wealthy and influential Second Presbyterian Church helped organize a new EPC inner-city congregation called Downtown Presbyterian on South Main Street, an intentionally interracial effort that attracted many worshipers. A new-style church, which featured informality in its services, it met for a time in the main hall of the recently-refurbished Central Station, where Amtrak passenger trains called for passengers on their

[1189] http://ligonduncan.com/a-milestone-for-redeemer-church-jackson-ms-and-an-important-day-for-the-pca/ Accessed 1.29.26. See Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Michael O. Emerson, with Rodney M. Woo, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[1190] http://www.onehornlake.org/our-vision/ Accessed 1.29.26.

[1191] Will D. Campbell, *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962): 85.

[1192] Lucas, *Blessed Zion*, 173-74.

[1193] Lucas, *Grace Transforms*, 57.

twice-daily trips through Memphis. Historians such as Slade believed that far more needed to be done, but that positive steps had been taken, representing dramatic change from earlier times.[1194]

Meanwhile, the predominately white, suburban Hope Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee (weekly attendance averaging 6,800), just a few miles north of the Mississippi state line—the largest congregation of the EPC—called the Rev. Rufus Smith, who was African American, as its pastor.

William Winter Led Efforts for Racial Justice and Positive Change

William Winter rendered significant service to the Church throughout his years in public life. During the 1960s, nearly all of the state's progressive church leaders were either driven from their pulpits or chose to leave the state, but Winter, a PCUS elder, stood almost alone. He remained in the state and continued the effort for racial justice and positive change both within and beyond the organized church. While offering significant service through the ecclesiastical structures of the PCUS, his primary venue of activity was in state government and the political sphere. In the legislature, as well as through his efforts while serving as lieutenant governor and governor, Winter was among the few progressives in the state who was able to maintain influence, though his efforts did not come without setbacks. Even within the Synod of Mississippi, some opposed his efforts to bring change. However, because of his patience and perseverance, much of significance was accomplished. His strategies are instructive and have been carefully analyzed by historian Charles C. Bolton in a 2008 *Journal of Mississippi History* article, "William F. Winter and the Politics of Racial Moderation in Mississippi."[1195]

Many of Winter's best-remembered achievements for Mississippi lay in the area of civil rights. Like most white Presbyterians, Winter did not do his work on the front lines in the state's civil rights struggle. As with other Southern moderates, he found his effectiveness in gradual, but significant work to bring change. Principally, though not exclusively, this effort lay in persuading the legislature to fund improved educational opportunities for all the state's children—Black and white.[1196]

Born February 21, 1923, in rural Grenada County, Winter was reared in Grenada's First Presbyterian Church. The family also attended Bethel Presbyterian Church, a rural Grenada County near their farm. As a young man, Winter would teach Sunday school in the small Bethel congregation. In his growing-up years, he had ample opportunity to see the inequities of Mississippi's educational system. His father was in the legislature, giving Winter occasion to see one venue with the power to ameliorate conditions for the state's poorest citizens. He received a good education in the Grenada public schools and at the University of Mississippi, all the while realizing that the African American young people in the farming community where he was reared were grossly deprived—unable at the time to attend either of these institutions. During World War II, Winter was assigned to train Black troops for Army service. He realized that African American men who had fought for their country would, upon returning to Mississippi, be denied the very rights they had fought to defend. Not only would rights be denied, but many would also be treated in humiliating ways by merchants, employers, and public officials. As a result of this experience, he came to see, "how unreal was the world in which I had grown up, the segregated world." William Winter's wartime experience as a white officer in command of Black soldiers showed him the Jim Crow South for the first time through the eyes of his Black fellow soldiers.

As he told interviewer Peter Slade, he became "convinced that when [he] got back to civilian life things would never be the same." Charles Bolton has written that Winter realized that while states like Mississippi spent a great deal of energy fighting racial change that would inevitably come, they also gave little attention to the serious

[1194] http://downtownchurch.com/history. Accessed 1.29.26. Slade, 123; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

[1195] Charles C. Bolton, "William F. Winter and the Politics of Racial Moderation in Mississippi," 335-82.

[1196] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 6.

educational and economic programs that plagued them. Winter, perhaps drawing on his Presbyterian roots, saw improved education for all as the key to resolving this conundrum.[1197]

He ran for the state House of Representatives while still in law school, joining a number of other young legislators elected after returning home from service in World War II, and as Andrew P. Mullins has noted, upon arrival for the first legislative sessions, he found that the leadership was still largely dominated "by the most reactionary and conservative defenders of the economic and social status quo." He witnessed a kind of "political schizophrenia" in which young progressives who sought changes to improve the quality of life met with an "almost paranoid resistance to any change" because of older legislators' fear than any change would involve a moderation of racial segregation. Such attitudes were reflected in the state's pulpits and within the governing bodies of the churches, as well as among many business leaders and educators. There were hard lessons to be learned. Winter wrote that, initially, "many of us believed . . . that these were not necessarily collision courses and that in emphasizing plans for economic development and education we would achieve the ultimate solutions to our dilemma. Soon we would find that it would be more complex than that." Winter learned that another Presbyterian virtue, the gift of patience, had to be cultivated.[1198]

During his early years in the legislature, Winter coauthored the state's first Workmen's Compensation Act. He was active in an effort to fund a long-range highway program and establish a four-year medical school, the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. When the legislature was slow making improvements to the state's woefully underfunded educational system, Winter challenged the powerful House Speaker Walter Sillers of Rosedale to emphasize the need for improvements in this era. Though not successful in unseating Sillers, his challenge to the older man brought the concern for better schools and the legislature's resistance to improvements out into the open.

In the 1950s, Winter campaigned for U. S. Senator John C. Stennis, another active Presbyterian, with the assignment to seek out "forward-looking men who have faith in the future, not men who are looking backward and who are extreme reactionaries." Winter served as a legislative aide to Stennis in Washington, where he and Mrs. Winter attended the Central Presbyterian Church, a PCUS congregation where the Stennis family also worshiped.[1199]

Following the Supreme Court's 1954 public school desegregation decision, Winter did not join the ardent advocates of massive resistance, believing that the state needed to follow federal law, including the *Brown* decision. Writing in *The Mississippi Law Journal* in the aftermath of the 1956 legislative session—which had put forth many resistance measures, including repeal of the state's compulsory school attendance law, Winter stated that, "It seems realistic to believe that the application of any statute that has the effect of continuing a pattern of mandatory segregation will be invalidated."

In 1961, Benjamin Muse was appointed to visit Mississippi several times on behalf of the Southern Regional Council, an Atlanta group that advocated racial equality in the South. He noted that the state had, "many more moderates" than he anticipated, estimating that perhaps a majority of "educated Mississippians are silently or privately moderate on the race issue." Muse named Winter and 18 other state officials, including state Supreme Court Justice William N. Ethridge Jr., also a Presbyterian, and former governor J. P. Coleman, then a member of the legislature, and noted the difficulty faced by these men, declaring that, "Even the most marginal public approach," advocating anything less than absolute resistance, "requires courage."[1200]

During this period, Winter performed difficult work on behalf of the PCUS Synod of Mississippi, chairing the commission to which responsibility for consolidating the state's five presbyteries into three was given, as well as serving on the commission, which, several years later, dealt with the unrest in the Presbytery of Central Mississippi. Bolton described the situation in this way:

[1197] William Winter, interview with Peter Slade, October 13, 2004, Jackson, Mississippi, in Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society*, 27; Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 2-22, 7, 55.

[1198] Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, xxi-xxii.

[1199] Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, xiii; Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 80, 84.

[1200] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 115.

In addition to speaking out for moderation in his public appearances, Winter also joined moderate religious leaders in Mississippi, following the violence of 1964, in their efforts to assist black religious communities attacked by white segregationists and to urge whites to condemn racial violence. Throughout the South, segregationists and racial moderates in various denominations and individual congregations battled over how to respond to the civil rights movement. Winter had been an active Presbyterian his entire life and was a leader in the Mississippi Presbyterian church, although he was certainly not the kind of politician who wore religion on his sleeve. He also knew from direct experience that religious belief and racial toleration did not necessarily go hand-in-hand.

In June 1963, after attending J. P. Coleman's opening rally in Ackerman for his gubernatorial bid, Winter traveled to Memphis for a meeting of the PCUS Synod of Mississippi scheduled for the following day. That night, Byron de la Beckwith assassinated Mississippi civil rights leader Medgar Evers. Winter learned about the killing when he came down for breakfast the following morning. Eating with one of the respected elders of the Mississippi Presbyterian church, the man told Winter, "The nig--r got what he deserved." Winter sat in shocked silence. He marveled at how such a religious man could make this assertion.[1201]

After the murders of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney and a spate of church bombings in southwest Mississippi during the summer of 1964, Winter joined an interracial gathering of civic and religious leaders, including Rabbi Perry Nussbaum, Episcopal bishop John Allin, and Catholic priest Bernard Law, to form a group known as the Committee of Concern (known later as the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference). The group quietly raised money to rebuild black churches burned by the Klan. Within six months the committee had raised $50,000, much of it in contributions by Mississippians, and with help from northern and western college students, had rebuilt six black churches. White clergy leaders also tried, with somewhat less success, to inspire white people of faith 'to express outrage at what was going on and bring some sanity to the situation.[1202]

Years later, as he reflected on these matters, Winter recalled that, "I was the chairman of the judicial commission in the Synod of Mississippi to investigate the efforts to cause a schism in the church. That was in the early sixties, the last place in the world an aspiring politician should have been. I found myself right in the middle of that huge church conflagration—and it was a lose-lose for everybody. There was no way we were going to preserve the unity of the church, given the mindset of the [conservatives]. And they looked at me as a heretic. . . . I have been in a lot of secular political battles but I have never been in a battle where there was as much real gut-wrenching animosity expressed toward me. . . . They threatened me."[1203]

In 1956, Winter was appointed by Governor Coleman as State Tax Collector, which included, among its varied duties, collecting the state's infamous black market tax on liquor. Elected to the office in his own right, Winter advocated its abolition, even though its occupant was paid a percentage of the taxes collected. His efforts were approved in 1962 when the legislature voted to combine the duties of the office with the State Tax Commission.[1204]

President Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 bolstered Winter's determination to advocate more forcefully for change within the state. Running for governor in 1967, Winter turned aside from the general state of alarm over enforcement of school desegregation court orders and asserted that the real cause for alarm was the fact that "Mississippi is last in the nation in nearly every index of support to education." During this period, Winter also emerged as a national leader in the mental health cause.[1205]

After two unsuccessful campaigns for governor in 1967 and 1975 and after four years as lieutenant governor, Winter was elected to the state's highest office in November 1980. In the shadow of a discredited administration

[1201] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 122.

[1202] Bolton, "William F. Winter and the Politics of Racial Moderation," 378-80.

[1203] William Winter, interview with Peter Slade, October 13, 2004, Jackson, Mississippi, in Slade, 223.

[1204] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 102.

[1205] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 122, 132-33.

that preceded his term, Winter said, "I pledge to the people of Mississippi that if I am elected, they will never have to question the honesty of their governor or be embarrassed by his performance. . . ." The inaugural ceremonies began with an ecumenical, integrated service near the capitol at Galloway Memorial Methodist Church, a church that had been at the center of civil rights resistance, leading to the resignations of several pastors in succession, but which now welcomed all to its services as did many other formerly all-white congregations in Jackson.

Renovation of the state capitol was under way, so that the swearing-in ceremonies took place in the House of Representatives Chamber of the historic Old Capitol, where Mississippi's Secession Convention had met almost 120 years before. In his address, Winter voiced a concern he had stated in his political campaigns, that many of Mississippi's problems were self-induced: "We have wasted too much time. We have wasted too much of our substance. We have spent too many of our years, too much of our energy being against things we did not understand, being afraid of change, being suspicious of the intellectual, and being oblivious to our image and reputation." He emphasized that "the old solutions will not do," and challenged his hearers "not [to] be afraid to launch out into new areas." Quoting part of Depression-era governor Mike Conner's inaugural, he said, "If in this hour we shall set the public welfare as the only goal of our ambition . . . we need not fear for the results of our labors, nor fear for the future of the state."[1206]

Winter's many years of service in state offices as well as in the legislature served him well as governor. These experiences had taught him much about the arts of legislating and administration, as well as about the diplomacy needed to effect change in a conservative state. He possessed rare skills for working positively with lawmakers and administrators. Andrew Mullins wrote that, "As governor, Winter's initial priority was to restore integrity to office. He pushed for laws to provide for open meetings and open records, to protect the state's historic structures, and to increase the number of women and minorities appointed to boards and commissions. Education became the center of his and his staff's efforts."[1207]

Winter's greatest accomplishment was the 1982 enactment of a statewide public school kindergarten program. By the early 1980s, Mississippi was the only state without public funding for kindergartens. It was 45th among the states in per capita spending on education and 49th in spending per pupil. The illiteracy rate was more than double the national average, and the state was tied for the lowest median number of school years completed, the lowest teacher's salaries, and the highest rejection rate for entry into the military based on mental aptitude tests. Winter cited such statistics in connection with another number—the state was last in per capita income. It also had a very high rate of criminal incarceration.[1208]

[1206] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 192-93; cf. Jere Nash and Andy Taggart, "William Winter and His Campaigns for Governor: 1967, 1975, and 1979," *Journal of Mississippi History* 70 (Winter 2008): 383-402; Shannon Dortsch, "William Winter Stays in Touch with Faith and Values," *Mid-South Presbyterian* 5 (December 1985): 7.

[1207] Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, xxx-xxxi.

[1208] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 215; cf. Andrew P. Mullins Jr., "The Education Programs of Governor William Winter," *Journal of Mississippi History* 70 (Winter 2008): 407-435.

Governor William Winter and family pictured on the steps of the Mississippi Governor's Mansion.

The state had abolished its compulsory education law in 1956, and though a new law had been enacted in 1977, there was no funding to enforce it. Winter worked with progressive Republican leader Jack Reed of Tupelo to bring about improvement in this and other aspects of the state's educational system. Winter confronted the lawmakers with hard facts: "Fifty-nine out of every 100 students who enter high school in the state do not finish. Welfare and pension checks are the largest single source of income in 31 of Mississippi's 82 counties. Mississippi has the lowest per capita income of any state." Presbyterian elder Elise Winter joined the effort. She visited schools and made speeches, enlisting legislators in the effort to further improvements. Winter's educational proposals were stymied several times, and though many felt it would be impossible to pass them during his final year in office, after much opposition, the sweeping education reform legislation was finally passed in what was called the "Christmas Miracle of 1982." As Mullins recalled, "With passage of this legislation to restructure K-12 education, Mississippi became the leader of the education reform movement that swept the nation in the late 1980s and early 1990s."[1209]

At a 1983 dinner at the governor's mansion, Winter told Myrlie Evers, widow of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, "We white folks owe your martyred husband as much as black folks do, for he helped free us, too." Later, Winter expressed similar sentiments about James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Speaking at the dedication of a memorial to the three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, June 20, 2004, he said, "The names James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner are forever enshrined in that pantheon of heroes to whom all of us owe so much. This event today is not only a celebration of the lives of these men but it is an affirming of the liberation which has come to us. And it is a liberation that has helped set us all free. . . . They were working to free all of us."[1210]

After his term as governor, Winter continued his work on behalf of the state's public education system. As he often said, "The only road out of poverty and economic dependency runs by the school house." In 1988, Winter urged that the South had "been selling the wrong things . . . cheap labor, cheap land, and low taxes. And we got exactly what we paid for." He spoke of "two Souths which are rapidly growing further apart" and observed that, "Just as our nation found more than a century ago that it could not endure half-slave and half-free, so our region cannot stand, much less move ahead, if we are permanently divided into two groups of people—one thriving, prospering, enjoying the good life that comes from education and social privilege and preferment—the other struggling to survive, locked into an existence limited by ignorance, disease, poverty, and misery." Soon after,

[1209] See Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 215-26, 220-31; Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, xxx-xxxi; Dortsch, "William Winter Stays in Touch with Faith and Values," 7.

[1210] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 202, excerpted from Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, 98.

Winter and others formed the Foundation for the Mid-South. Joining this effort were other Presbyterians such as Sam Walton of Arkansas and Billy Percy, of Greenville.[1211]

Winter continued to express the long-standing Presbyterian commitment to education, stating in a speech at George Washington University on July 1, 2004, that "when all is said and done . . . the success or failure of integration in a given community is going to depend on the conviction of parents as to what will best serve their children. . . . The bottom line is that in most cases it will be the parents, and in some cases the children themselves, who will decide where they go to school. This is where black and white parents must come together to understand how they can support each other in maintaining strong public schools."[1212]

A frequent speaker in churches, Winter addressed many subjects in his addresses. In July 2000, at Grace Chapel Presbyterian Church in Madison, he decried the amount of money it took to run for office in the late 20th century. He also stated that when he entered politics,

> The biggest thing wrong then was that our political system back then excluded so many people." He remembered that, "When I was first elected to the legislature, there were no black voters in my county, even though half the people in the county were black. We gave almost no thought to the effect of public policies on the environment. We did not think it necessary to educate more than a small fraction of our people. We had little concern for the conditions under which thousands of people worked. We spent more time passing laws to keep people from going to the movies on Sunday afternoons or drinking a glass of wine than we did on providing adequate schools for everybody. Here are some of the questions that we ought to be asking now about our political system. Is it sensitive to the needs of the people as a whole and not just those who make the largest campaign contributions? Is it dedicated to bring people of different racial and ethnic and religious backgrounds together? Is it a process that accentuates our common humanity and advances the ideal that we are indeed our brother's and sister's keeper?[1213]

Setting forth his political philosophy, he wrote in 2004,

> As a Christian who professes to believe in an all-powerful and all-loving God, I feel that religion ought to serve as a reconciling and healing force in our society—not as a divisive one. There is a disturbing tendency these days to reduce complex questions to a naively simplistic approach represented by the question, 'What would Jesus do?' One of the dangers in that approach is that in our zeal to find religious answers to complicated secular problems we tend to equate sectarian dogma with political orthodoxy. That makes for a potent devil's brew.
>
> A better course it seems to me is simply to recognize that on most major public issues conscientious and faithful Christians may hold deeply-felt differences of opinion. The point is that our Christian faith should provide us who are or have been public officials with the broad foundation on which to make wise, compassionate, and just decisions. There are so many times when the path is not clear cut. That is almost always the case when the issues are hotly contested. Then the conscientious official can only fall back on the instinctive insight that comes from his or her faith that creates a sense of what is right.
>
> That faith, which I have tried to apply in my own life, has found special inspiration for me in many passages of scripture but from two in particular. The first is from the Book of Micah: 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' [Micah 6:8]. The other is the great commandment as set forth in the Gospel of Matthew: 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' [Matthew 25:40][1214]

[1211] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 251-54.

[1212] Excerpted in Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, 98-99.

[1213] Talk given at Grace Chapel Presbyterian Church, Madison (July 30, 2000), excerpted from Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, 46.

[1214] Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, 216-17.

Winter wrote that he would tell a grandson that,

> We can't know much about who we are unless we have an understanding of where we have come from. We have to remember that we are not just isolated individual beings who happen to occupy a few cubic feet of space on this planet for a brief period of time. Each of us is a continuing living part of a stream of people—some noble and notable—some weak and wanting—who for better or for worse have put a certain stamp on us. . . . It is important . . . for this little boy to know that the world does not begin nor end with him and that in between his being born and his dying, he has a link to forge . . . . I would try somehow to tell him that he will be living in a world full of diverse human beings and that he must learn how to get along with other people, especially those whose culture and background and religion and color are different from his own. I would want him to be a conservative in the assertion of his own rights, but I would want him to be a liberal in the extension of those same rights to others. In short, I would teach him, if I could, how to live with the confidence and self-assurance and compassion that are the true measure of a mature man or woman.[1215]

Speaking at the J. J. White Memorial Church in McComb in 2007, Governor Winter said that, "We are not products, exclusively, of the time in which we live . . .

> We are the products of all that has gone before; accumulated values and wisdom are transmitted. We are stewards of those values. Not only must we not let that reservoir be diminished, or taken away in a moment of transitory frustration, but, we must remember that we have an obligation by our own lives to add to it. In his goodness, God did not put us in an intellectual or spiritual straitjacket; he released us from the burden of having to live by superficial form and inflexible dogma, frequently masquerading under the pretext of religious orthodoxy. He left us free to roam the valleys of our own exploring, with our religious experience, coming out of a church like this one as our compass, and with Christ as our guide. Free, thereby, to reap the rewards and satisfactions that come from reaching out to embrace life with all of its challenges and adventures. It is only through this process that we become the mature, sensitive, compassionate people that Christ would have us be. It is this accumulation of spiritual maturity and wisdom that forms the permanent basis of our church.[1216]

Winter was instrumental in the formation of an Institute for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi in 1999. Speaking at the ceremony that brought the institute into existence, Winter said, "The fault line of race is the paramount factor keeping us from realizing our full potential as a state and as a nation."[1217]

The former governor received a signal honor in 2003 when, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, the University of Mississippi named the Institute for Racial Reconciliation in his honor. A careful student of history, and one who invoked its lessons, Winter helped to reactivate the long-dormant Mississippi Historical Society in 1952, serving as its president two years later. He was a trustee of the state archives continuously after 1957, a task to which he would devote over 50 years of leadership. He served as its president after 1973. In 2003, he was recognized for his service when his name was given to the handsome and well-equipped new State Archives and History building next door to Jackson's Old Capitol. A 2014 University of Mississippi film called *The Toughest Job*, by Matthew Graves—a filmmaker at the Southern Documentary Project, part the University's Center for the Study of Southern Culture—explored Winter's role as a leader in education reform, economic development, and racial

[1215] Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, 224-25.
[1216] Beth Wild, "Unity Service Celebrates J. J. White Memorial Church," *Presbyterian Voice* 18 (December 2007): 18.
[1217] Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi*, 261.

reconciliation. The film won an Emmy for best historical documentary by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.[1218]

As time passed, most agreed with Winter's early assessment that a better public education system offered the key to an easing of the state's many problems. Charles C. Bolton wrote that, "In the twentieth century, Governor William Winter did more than any other chief executive to advance the cause of public education in the state of Mississippi." As he often said, "The right to receive an adequate education is one of the most basic civil rights of all." In this he remained true to the principles of his Church.[1219]

An Apology for Segregation and Racism

The 2016 PCA Assembly's action apologizing for segregation and racism originated from a personal overture submitted to the 2015 Assembly by the Revs. Sean Michael Lucas and J. Ligon Duncan, which asked the church to "recognize and confess our church's covenantal and generational involvement in and complicity with racial injustice inside and outside of our churches during the Civil Rights period." Lucas wrote that "While the PCA had previously in 2002 confessed its covenantal and generational involvement in the sins of 1861—its general involvement with race-based chattel slavery—it had never owned the sins of 1961; in fact it has shown a general unwillingness to admit directly that many of our conservative churches and leaders from that period stood against racial integration in church and society." Lucas believed the 2004 PCA Pastoral Letter on the Gospel and Race had "missed the opportunity to detail the ways our leaders failed to promote biblical positions on race and racial justice." He explained that the personal resolution—"originating out of Mississippi which has served as the ecclesial seedbed of the PCA and as the central stage of the battle over Civil Rights—was meant as a vehicle for our church finally to own its past, to grieve for and hate the sins found there, and to turn to God and each other, purposing and endeavoring after new ways of obedience." The 2015 Assembly referred the matter to the next year's meeting.[1220]

The intervening year gave time for further work on the issue. The Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley, which covered Central Mississippi, studied a proposed overture to the General Assembly over a period of several months. The overture, entitled "Racism and Christian Unity," was studied over a period of several months and was adopted by the presbytery on May 3, 2016, during its stated meeting at French Camp. It proved to be the most far-reaching statement on race relations ever adopted by a Mississippi Presbyterian governing body.

The Mississippi Valley overture addressed the past, claiming "the movement of Bible-believing, Reformed Christians who brought us into being, and recognize our indebtedness to them, while we also acknowledge the sins and failures of our movement and denomination, including in those areas that have ongoing and significant negative ramifications for the unity, ministry and witness of the church today." It stated that,

> We grieve and lament that we have become increasingly aware that during the Civil Rights era, many of those who became our founding denominational leaders, churches and members failed to live up to their and our own *Confession's* Biblical doctrine of man, that all mankind is created by God 'after His own image" (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter IV, section ii), not only refusing to support, but also, both congregationally and individually, actively working against racial equality (the unqualified acknowledgement in belief and practice that African Americans are fully human and made in the image

[1218] Emett Barfield, "Presbyterian Elder Honored by Alma Mater," *Presbyterian Voice* 14 (April 2003): 12; "Archives and History Building Dedication Honors Distinguished Presbyterian Elder," *Presbyterian Voice* 14 (December 2003): 26.

[1219] Mullins, *The Measure of Our Days*, xxiii; Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All*, 4.

[1220] Sean Michael Lucas, "Owning the Past: The Spirituality of the Church in History, Failure, and Hope," Reformed Faith and Practice (May 2016): 1. http://journal.rts.edu/article/owning-our-past-the-spirituality-of-the-church-in-history-failure-and-hope/ 1.29.26.

of God, that no ethnicity is inherently superior to another, and that the Bible provides no grounds for the enforced segregation of ethnicities) in both church and society.

Sins "of omission and commission" were specified as

> barring African Americans from worship services; misusing and twisting the Bible to support racial segregation; participating in and defending white supremacist organizations; failing to speak out against state-supported segregation, not supporting efforts to secure African Americans access to basic human and civil rights, and neglecting to show solidarity with and support for African American brothers and sisters in Christ, as they endured various kinds of discrimination and duress in the Civil Rights era.

The resolution took note of the denomination's 2002 resolution that acknowledged "covenantal, generational, heinous sins" connected with unbiblical forms of servitude, but stated that it had not dealt specifically "with the heinous sins committed during the much more recent Civil Rights era, which betrayed the visible unity of all believers in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22), the command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31), and the image of God in all people (Genesis 1:27)."

The presbytery believed that an unwillingness, "to acknowledge, confess and repudiate these sins, and to speak openly and contritely of them, significantly hinders our present-day witness and unity . . . as well as our Gospel outreach to men and women of every tribe, tongue, people and nation." It stated that the sins of racism and racial injustice, "not only toward African Americans, but also toward other racial minorities" were "not simply past sins, but continue to be sins with which our churches and congregants wrestle."

Noting that scripture enjoined the necessity of unity in the body of Christ, "such that when a brother is thought to have something against another brother, reconciliation between them supersedes even worship (Matthew 5:23, 24)," and offered that "God has once more given the PCA a gracious opportunity to show the beauty, grace, and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through confession and through the fruits of repentance," including, "growing into cultural intelligence regarding minority ethnicities; establishing interracial friendships and partnerships inside and outside our denomination; renewing our church's commitment to develop minority leadership at the congregational, presbytery, and denominational levels; and encouraging a denomination-wide vision for and commitment to a more racially and ethnically diverse church."

Members of the presbytery's Special Committee on Racial Reconciliation included the Revs. James Baird, Roger Collins, Ligon Duncan, Ricky Glenn, Robert Hays, Elbert McGowan Jr., and elders Al Arnold, Gene McRoberts, Kelle Menogan, Hugh Potts, Kevin Simpson, and Will Thompson.

The 2016 PCA Assembly adopted the overture from the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley and extended its repentance to include actions taken by its members during the civil rights era, recommending that pastoral letters be sent, addressing local situations.

Pastoral Letter from First Church, Hattiesburg

The session of Hattiesburg's First Presbyterian Church responded to this suggestion. It adopted the 2004 PCA Assembly's Pastoral Letter on the Gospel and Race and sent a pastoral letter to its congregation on August 17, 2016, which said that,

> The session . . . confesses our present and past sins of pride and complacency in regard to racism. Historically we failed to take a more proactive stance for racial reconciliation. And we recognize that in the present we have harbored racism in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We are sorry and we humbly repent. We pledge ourselves to work hard in a manner consistent with the Gospel to encourage racial reconciliation and to live out the words of our Lord Jesus to love one another.
>
> Because of the transformative power of the Gospel, in more recent days our congregation has sought

reconciliation in the city of Hattiesburg and in Forrest and Lamar Counties, particularly through our partnerships with Mission Mississippi, United Christian Ministries, Hope for Hattiesburg, and Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church. In its final actions the session formally recognized these fruits of repentance in seeking relationship and reconciliation with our African American brothers and sisters, and we further committed our church to pursue additional formal and informal ways to bring the Gospel to bear on this issue.

The session believes that the cross of Jesus breaks down 'the dividing wall of hostility' between whites and Blacks; that the cross 'reconciles us both to God in one body;' and that we are now one new humanity in Jesus (Ephesians 2:14-16). The only hope for our city, state, and country in its present racial division is the Gospel of Jesus; the church is and must be the place above all where such reconciliation happens. . . .

The letter was signed by its moderator, the Rev. Sean Michael Lucas, and clerk, William R. Stanway.

Pastoral Letter from the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley

In the summer of 2016, the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley also sent a lengthy pastoral letter to its members and churches, citing passages from scripture and the *Westminster Confession and Catechisms* dealing with this subject. It took note of the fact that while most PCA churches in central Mississippi were white, the state's population was 37% African American (and the Jackson metro area about 50% African American). The letter declared that, "If Bible-believing Presbyterians had carefully studied and lawfully endeavored 'to preserve the life of ourselves and others,' including mistreated ethnic minorities, 'by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any' and defending others against unjust violence [quotations from *Larger Catechism*, Q. 135], the history of Presbyterianism in U. S. culture from Reconstruction, through Jim Crow and the Civil Rights era would read differently."

The pastoral letter stated that, "Racism entails a denial of the biblical doctrines of creation, man, the communion of saints and is disobedience to the moral law." It said, further, that "Racism is not only sin, serious sin, it is heresy." The letter concluded that, "Relatively few of us have close friends of other ethnicities, especially in the context of our local churches. That means that understanding the perspective of fellow Bible-believing Presbyterians, who are of a different ethnicity, and with whom we have an actual relationship, on the issue of racial reconciliation, is a challenge." Active study and engagement on the issue was encouraged, with a comprehensive list of resources provided.

"Owning Our Past"

In May 2016, Sean Michael Lucas published an essay entitled, "Owning Our Past: The Spirituality of the Church in History, Failure, and Hope," in the journal *Reformed Faith and Practice*, published by Reformed Theological Seminary.

Lucas called for a reconsideration and reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, long held by strict Presbyterian conservatives in the South. As articulated by the antebellum South Carolina thinker James Henley Thornwell, the Church had "no commission to construct society afresh . . . to change the forms of its political constitutions. . . . 'The Church' said Thornwell, 'has a fixed and unalterable Constitution; and that Constitution is the Word of God. She can announce what it teaches, enjoin what it commands, prohibit what it condemns. . . . Beyond the Bible she can never go, and apart from the Bible she can never speak.'"[1221]

Conservatives who followed Thornwell's ideas asserted that the Church might comment only on moral

[1221] James Henley Thornwell, "Relation of the Church to Slavery," in *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, ed. By B. M. Palmer and J. B. Adger, 4 vols. Reprint edition. (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1974), 4:382–84.

imperatives found in scripture, and that the Church should not involve itself in secular affairs unless a clear moral issue presented itself.

Lucas argued that "the Bible certainly addresses issues that involve social, economic, and political realities and directly impact matters of public policy." He cited another 19th century PCUS writer, Francis Beattie, who understood that the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church could be difficult to apply. In his 1898 book, *The Presbyterian Standards: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, Beattie said, "These difficulties appear in connection with certain questions which are partly civil and partly religious in their nature. Such questions as education, marriage, the Sabbath, and temperance are illustrations of what is here meant."[1222]

Lucas noted that Thornwell and other Southern thinkers had acknowledged as much when they penned defenses of slavery, a practice that had religious implications, but was also regulated under civil law. He argued, further, that the doctrine of the Church's spirituality was developed in a selective way. "It was invoked to prevent conversations on race," while church leaders ignored it when discussing other issues with both religious and civil implications: "Education, temperance, or sexual morality."

Lucas asked, "What do we make of this? How do we go about owning our past—especially the white majority's failure to recognize its cultural captivity and maintenance of a system of injustice that has prevented genuine truth and reconciliation between blacks and whites? How should we understand this "spirituality of the church" doctrine—is it a white protective gesture or even a racial ideology?"

Indeed, invocation of this doctrine had been key to the antebellum defense of segregation. It had also been invoked by many who resisted the civil rights movement. He noted statements by 20th century conservative leaders such as Columbia Seminary's William Childs Robinson who argued, "Is it quite right to turn a Church away from the very principle that gave it life and independent being? The nonsecular character of the Southern Presbyterian Church is her '*raison d'etre*.'"[1223]

Lucas quoted discussions surrounding the doctrine regularly invoked the *Westminster Confession's* statement that, "Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate." He noted, however, that "The English Parliament brought the Westminster Assembly into existence in 1643 *for the purpose of setting national religious policy* (emphasis his). Their work, while biblical and theological (and so, 'spiritual'), was profoundly civil and political, and they clearly understood it to be such." He also noted that the *Confession's* writers expected that the documents they framed would serve a state-supported, established Church. The Church was not "to usurp the legislative role of the state, to interfere with the state's processes, or to involve itself needlessly or incessantly in political conniving (as those Protestants saw Roman Catholics doing). The church as a church has a different mission: to make disciples through its means of grace and to instruct them in the duties of the moral law. However," Lucas believed, "This would not prevent the church from speaking truth to political power or from involving itself in matters of clear social importance."

Lucas believed that Southern Presbyterians had "misunderstood and misapplied" what the *Westminster Confession* taught. "What originally was meant as a way of keeping the spheres of church and state separate—not the spiritual and 'secular,' not faith and politics, not love and justice—evolved to create all sorts of complications." He said, "For conservative southern Presbyterians, it became an excuse not to involve themselves in the righting of social wrongs form African Americans both within and outside the church as well as a powerful tool to shut down opposition to the racial status quo."

Lucas asserted at the 2015 PCA Assembly that "one of the reasons that the PCA Forty-third General Assembly failed to own the past was its commitment to a flawed understanding of the spirituality of the church doctrine."

[1222] Francis R. Beattie, *The Presbyterian Standards: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.* Reprint edition. (Greenville, S. C.: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1997): 362.

[1223] William Childs Robinson, "Questions Which Divide Us as Citizens," *Christian Observer* (December 26, 1934): 15.

He argued that "It is more than that: as conservative Presbyterians, we have used this flawed understanding of the spirituality of the church as an excuse not to do what is right toward African Americans and we have used it as a tool of power to maintain a system of white privilege."

He said, "We did not and have not raised our voices when we could have and should have. Conservative southern Presbyterians—the ones who formed the PCA—could have joined the rest of the PCUS in petitioning the authorities on behalf of basic civil rights for southern Blacks. They could have joined in support of *Brown v. Board of Education*, worked within structures to advance toward racial justice." He noted a few conservative Southern Presbyterians who had done these things, but said, "They were too few," concluding that the way forward would be "our common commitment to what the church as a church should be and should be doing. Central to that life together will be the ministry of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and prayer."

Lucas proposed that, "As we use these effectual meetings of our salvation, what we will find is that the grace that comes to us through them will transform us. It will drive us out into our world to share the Good News of Jesus, but also to live that transforming Gospel in tangible ways, as we love justice and mercy, as we extend ourselves in risky ways into the lives our neighbor. . . ." Lucas believed that "grace transforms everything." Seldom had a Presbyterian thinker spoken with such clarity on the complex subject of the Church and its spiritual and societal duties. His was the most forceful statement on racial justice ever articulated by a Mississippi Presbyterian.[1224]

At the Crossroads of Anxiety and Hope

As in other eras, Mississippi Presbyterians greeted the future with anxiety and hope. "We have moved through the last 40-odd years as if through a millennium," noted Wilmer C. Fields, an official with the Southern Baptist Commission in connection with Southern Christianity. Indeed, the expression, with all its religious overtones of judgment and divine return to earth, described a dramatic remaking of the South's political, economic, racial, and social institutions in the period following World War II. As Charles Reagan Wilson has remarked, "It may be that the South, the scene of the most dramatic changes in race relations and a radical transformation, with the move from farming to urban industrialization, in the relationship to the land, can distill its concentrated experiences into a national resource."[1225]

The respected Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow traced the anxieties of the PCUSA to those affecting American denominationalism generally. Although Presbyterians, like Southern Baptists and Episcopalians, had seen their share of denominational strife, a complex of social forces and competing world-views were responsible for its decline in numbers. Presbyterians formed a highly educated and upper-middle-class strata in American religious life, but Wuthnow noted that the rising prosperity and educational levels of other traditions had decreased the attractiveness or felt need to join the Presbyterian Church, as had been the case in the Eisenhower era. As birth rates declined and the population became more secular, Wuthnow forecast a smaller place for Presbyterians (as well as for its neighbor denominations). In 2015, the Rev. J. Ligon Duncan, chancellor of Reformed Seminary, spoke from the conservative perspective that, "During the early years of the PCA, which coincided with an era of unprecedented evangelical political influence, the 'Moral Majority' aspired to cultural dominance,' but he asserted that "Bible-believing Christians today hold no such illusions, and frankly wonder how long they will even be allowed a place at the table." Wuthnow believed that those who did adhere to the Church might do so with greater intentionality than in the era when church membership was a sometimes merely a social expectation.[1226]

Edward W. Farley, a Presbyterian theologian at Vanderbilt University, reminded Presbyterians of his era

[1224] See Sean Michael Lucas, *Race and the Roots of the PCA*, (five parts), http://www.reformation 21.org/blog/2015/02/race-and-the-roots-of-the-pres.php. Accessed 1.29.26.

[1225] Wilmer C. Fields, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Religion in the Changing South," 65-80; Wilson, *Judgment and Grace in Dixie*, 35; see Paul Harvey, "Religion, Race, and the Right in the South, 1945-1990," in Glenn Feldman, ed., *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005).

[1226] Robert Wuthnow, "The Restructuring of American Presbyterianism: Turmoil in One Denomination," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox,

that their church had many roots in non-establishment traditions, among persons who were ecclesiastically, if not educationally or economically, dispossessed. He believed the Church could find a new authenticity on the ecclesiastical margins. He also believed that the Presbyterian genius or "way," as Princeton's John Mackay had put it a generation earlier, "is not so much some distinctive deposit of doctrine, as a way "of transcending our deposited traditions under the constant nagging pressure of the question of truth."[1227]

Farley posed six questions that might guide the thinking of Presbyterians in the generation to follow: (1) Is Reformed theology modifiable? (2) Are Presbyterian confessional statements revisable? (3) Is a historical approach to scripture proper and useful? (4) Is the gospel consistent with the larger world of knowledge and the sciences? (5) Is the Christian church a pluralism of communities whose differences call for cooperation and mutual respect? and (6) Is the Christian gospel social in its character?[1228]

Recognizing Unity in Diversity

Churches sought the help of God and did the difficult work of change. Though it was easier to both within congregations as well as denominations to divide than to maintain unity amid doctrinal disagreement and social change, Presbyterians found a call in helping one another understand the nature of Christian unity. The Rev. Nicholas B. Phillips, pastor of New Hope Church in Biggersville, told his congregation, October 7, 2012—World Communion Sunday—that,

> As one person put it, 'What is common in community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument . . . in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals and values are thrashed out.
>
> Think about that.
>
> What helps to define us as a community, both the community that we have here at New Hope, and the community that we share with our fellow believers around the world, is the fact that while there are many points of belief that we share, there are *also* things about which we may vehemently disagree. Yes, we may stand shoulder to shoulder in certain matters of faith while we nose to nose on others.
>
> The point, though, is that we are all engaged in the same argument, that we all view ourselves as followers of the Christ and engaged in working out the best way, the right way to order our lives as his people in response to his calling.
>
> Part of what makes us a World-Wide Communion is not that we agree with one another in everything but that we believe the discussion we have, even that the arguments that we have, are of importance. It is then both our shared understanding as well as our common argument that helps define us as a community in communion, as the people of God, as brothers and sisters of one another.

Phillips elaborated the theme on October 27, 2012:

> The issues that Martin Luther raised started a debate that would forever change the face of Christianity. For many years, the day of Luther's historical hammering has been remembered on the Sunday closest to that date, which is always the last Sunday in October. Each year, for most churches, as we come to Reformation Sunday, we don't have to look far to see how some kinds of reforms are being proposed as to the way we 'do church.'

1990): 27-48; J. Ligon Duncan, "Foreword" to Sean Michael Lucas, *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2015): x.

[1227] Cf. John A. Mackay, *The Presbyterian Way of Life* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentiss-Hall, 1960).

[1228] Edward W. Farley, "The Presbyterian Heritage as Modernism: Reaffirming a Forgotten Past in Hard Times," in Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, eds., *The Presbyterian Perspective: Six Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990): 49-66.

An October many years ago might have seen the process taking place of ensuring that African American Christians were fully included in the governance of most Protestant denominations. Another October might have witnessed the debates that raged for several years over the ordination of women.

Recent Octobers have seen the divisive problems concerning sexual orientation. And out of this debate has arisen the question of how the different factions within the church stay under the same ecclesiastical roof while we engage in such debates: how do we disagree vehemently and yet remain together as one body?

And while all of these theological divisions with the church have been disturbing, I think over the long term it's really a sign of health, as hurtful as the rancor may be at times. I say it's healthy because I really believe that for any denomination, it's good to continue to look at ourselves as a church, how and why we do what we do, whether it is in church governance or worship liturgy or in the constitution.

It is good because it is a sign that we are committed not just to being reformed but also to reforming how we do things on the denominational level. Starting with the nailing of the Ninety-five theses to the Wittenberg Castle Church door in 1517, the Reformation of the church has been on-going and continues to be a hopeful sign of our faithfulness as a community. Nearly 500 years have passed since then, nearly 500 Octobers have come and gone since the sound of that hammer echoed through the empty church—Octobers that have marked a whole lot of reforming. And that continues to be a vital sign of growth for the church.

As other parts of the Church were activist, Mississippian Presbyterians remained the deliberative people they had always been, preferring to do their work well in preference to attempting all things. By some measures, they were overly focused on the perfecting of their organization and polity. This trait, present from the beginning, enabled other groups to outstrip their growth in ever-increasing numbers. Still, it was likely that there would be work to do for those whom God called into service through these branches of the Church.[1229]

[1229] Darryl G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007).

Afterword

A Victorian observer once declared that Christianity had so permeated the lives of England's people that it had ceased to have any positive effect. Religion had become such a commonplace amid the furniture of the mind and heart, that it no longer startled those who beheld it, robbing it of transforming power. By 1900, most Mississippians were culturally Christian. The presence of the gospel in their midst was assumed, but not celebrated. Among the dominant classes, a pattern of institutional conservatism had set in. People believed the best way to preserve the gospel's legacy was to forego change. The Church became a vehicle to regulate and control the lower classes. Surely, it might inspire and uplift; but only within certain parameters. Presbyterians, of course, occupied a high place of that religious landscape. Few, if any, Presbyterians joined with those who resorted to violence to enforce the state's strict racial codes but were generally silent in the face of such activities, hoping that their rectitude and sense of order would be sufficient to restrain the excesses of lower-class whites.

This was the attitude that prevailed throughout the 20th century and even into the 21st. Theologically, Presbyterians attributed near-perfect understanding to those who had bequeathed their tradition to them, particularly the thinkers and preachers of their tradition in the antebellum and postbellum South. The Bible was held in reverence—"the only infallible rule of faith and practice," a book inspired by God in such a way that the human frailties or ignorance of its earthly authors was overruled so as to communicate the word and will of God for all things necessary to life and salvation. The *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* were accorded almost the same veneration. Its authors were thought to have been led by God in their work almost to the degree that the writers of scripture had been. Few saw any need to amend or rewrite the *Confession*, save for the changes made with regard to the civil authorities following the American Revolution. Every child was expected to memorize and recite the *Shorter Catechism*. In sum, the Bible and the Westminster Standards were seen as timeless documents, sufficient, of themselves, to settle all questions of doctrine or practice. These beliefs gave Presbyterians deep sense of comfort and certainty as they faced the challenges of the rapidly changing world, but this outlook also nurtured a kind of provincialism that meshed well with attitudes that discredited the South's Christian witness and isolated its churches from other Christian people.

Commitment to what was called "the Southern way of life," suited the interests of those who benefited from their social, economic, and ecclesiastical positions. Human beings occupied a status in both society and Church that was fixed and unalterable, so that to question the status quo was to challenge a divine decree. So closely identified was culture with religion that it was difficult to see where the one ended and the other began. Coupled with this was a belief (held by most Presbyterians and adopted by almost everyone else), that the Church was not to address the culture directly. Converted souls would eventually find a way to change society and would do so without the Church's direct involvement.

Such thinking sheltered the Church, though some believed this view truncated the gospel (as well as the Reformed tradition), greatly limiting the Church's ability to serve the kingdom of God. Such privatized views of religion were the opposite of the egalitarian practices of the religious life that came from the Second Great Awakening, as the Deep South was being settled. But after 1830, as the price of cotton rose and the profits that could be gained from working large plantations with slaves increased, a reluctance to criticize the social arrangements

surrounding slavery appeared that contributed greatly to a kind of religious and cultural isolation that lasted a century and more after slavery was abolished.

Most American Presbyterians considered themselves "moderate" and hailed their moderation as a mark of their tradition's genius. Many Mississippi Presbyterians rejected "moderation" to embrace a kind of theological and cultural traditionalism—particularly in the realm of race—that marked Reformed life in Mississippi as one of the most conservative that could be found among the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of the world. This was especially true of the PCUS Presbyteries Meridian and of Central Mississippi, which functioned as independently as they could from the General Assembly and even of the synod of which they were part. This cultural isolation caused many Mississippians to believe themselves at odds, not only with the wider Church, but also as racial tensions grew with the rest of their country and the world. Many also saw themselves as preservers of a religion that was more faithful, true both to scripture and to the best religious practices, a sort of remnant of orthodoxy in the midst of the larger Church's apostasy.

In recent years, historians and other scholars have analyzed and sought to explain these phenomena. South Carolina Presbyterian and Union Seminary professor John H. Leith has made a helpful observation that, "theological time is not the same as chronological time. . . . Men live in different times theologically, intellectually, and socially, even though the chronological time is the same." There is now general agreement that Presbyterians in Mississippi during the 20th century, insofar as theological time can be judged from their Church's most decisive ecclesiastical decisions, lived theologically and socially in a 19th century world. With the exception of a few notable individuals, their theology did not take account of the Enlightenment and current scholarly study of the Bible, nor did their social attitudes and practices reflect the beliefs of persons in other sectors of the Church, or who lived in other parts of the United States, or even other parts of the South. The Church in Mississippi could not be categorized as a countercultural entity, as the Church, in many times and places, has believed itself called to be.[1230]

Most Mississippians, both within Presbyterian churches and beyond their bounds, manifested a defensive posture. Much good work was done educating young people, in furthering the work of missionaries on foreign fields, and in ameliorating some of the worst aspects of human suffering. But in their intellectual life—in the sphere of theology and ecclesiastical procedure, but also in stances toward politics, education, economics, sexual ethics and race—many Presbyterians felt their state and its churches were misunderstood and maligned. Some tried to justify and explain. Others dismissed the criticisms. Not a few took pride and championed their distinctive theology, embracing a kind of exceptionalism that claimed the blessing of God. But as more and more of the young left the state, even institutions as deeply embedded as the churches began to question heretofore unchallenged assumptions.

Some maintained the position of the Rev. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans (then part of the Synod of Mississippi), who argued in the PCUS General Assembly against establishment of official correspondence with the predominately Northern Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Palmer claimed that only the PCUS preserved an unadulterated Calvinism, and that "of these failing testimonies we [the PCUS] are now the sole surviving heir." Again and again, Presbyterians of Mississippi who claimed Palmer's mantle stood against any and all proposals for change. A minority argued that change would bring greater fidelity to the teachings of Christ, but the dominant position viewed each proposal as a manifestation of growing declension from scripture and the Church's doctrinal standards. As the state became more and more isolated, many nursed the idea that Mississippians were persecuted and maltreated in the wider national and ecclesiastical spheres. Just as in an earlier time when Mississippi Presbyterians such as James Smylie demanded that denominational discussions about abolishing slavery cease, a new kind of intellectual, if not political, secession occurred. The situation embodied by politicians such as Bilbo and Barnett also mirrored in the state's conservative churches.

The idea of biblical inerrancy emerged as a religious touchstone. The concept, as articulated by the Princeton theologians A. A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, involved the original manuscripts of the Bible, which, of course, had been lost since ancient times, but it involved an article of faith that God had caused the succeeding

[1230] John H. Leith, "Ernest Trice Thompson: Churchman," in *Ernest Trice Thompson: An Appreciation* (Richmond: Union Theological Seminary, 1964): 36.

copies of the biblical material to be made with sufficient care that all that was needed for life and salvation had been preserved. Any question of this doctrine was seen as leading to questioning of other doctrines, so that a commitment to inerrancy was held to be necessary at all costs. So urgent was this commitment that some, perhaps might not have believed Princeton's Warfield, when he wrote that "The verities of our faith would remain historically proven to us . . . even had we not the Bible; and through those verities, salvation."

The question, as it turned out, was not necessarily as to the veracity and therefore the authority of the Bible, but of its proper interpretation, for lurking beneath the arguments over things that could never be proved lay the issue of race relations and what the Bible's teachings on this subject meant for the daily lives of Mississippi Presbyterians. Presbyterians came to realize that the actions they were called to take lay not in resolution of arguments about the way long-lost scrolls and manuscripts came to be written, but in the decisions they made based on the texts of sacred writ, which had come down to them.[1231]

Mississippians at the dawn of the third Christian millennium had lived through several periods of rapid and stressful social change—change that Reformed Seminary chancellor, the Rev. J. Ligon Duncan, and a highly-respected PCA leader, described as a "cultural megashift." Religious changes had also occurred, even among those who sought to resist change. While not typically a driver of change, Presbyterians had played a role at many levels. At their best, the state's Presbyterians helped each other change, bringing the wisdom of their tradition and the challenge and comfort of their faith to the effort. At times, the Church stood against the wider culture, at other times, it was captive to it, again, particularly in the realm of race. Individuals and congregations sometimes did both in the same moment as they confronted a multiplicity of confusing situations with which they were called to deal. In many ways, the Church, as well as the state, seemed asymmetrically aligned to the rest of the country.[1232]

As persons who placed high value on a received tradition, Mississippi Presbyterians, in all their branches, along with many others, had difficulty coping with change. Many wished their Church to be at all times and in every way a refuge from the changes that were crowding in upon their lives—a valid function of religion—albeit not its only or its primary one. Yet, in many ways, it was the Church that provided a forum for people to deal with some of the most intensely difficult issues of their time—issues such as racial integration, birth control, divorce and remarriage, and equality in church life for women and their ordination to positions of leadership and authority. The Church also provided a forum to discuss the emergence of greater theological diversity; the understanding and, in some cases, acceptance of homosexual persons; political and ideological pluralism; and the growing secularity of American life. The Church had not set out to be a forum for such discussions; yet these life issues forced themselves upon it. All these were matters that came to a particular point in the intimacy of local congregations. Needless to say, the Church dealt with such questions in a variety of ways, within and beyond the structures that the Presbyterian form of government provided, as the emergence of new Presbyterian denominations—PCUSA, PCA, and EPC—would attest. Even within these church families, variations emerged as Presbyterians continued their historic attempt to live on the Protestant Reformation's continuum of defined belief and tolerated difference.

Not all found a place in the discussions. African Americans were but one of the groups excluded in the governing bodies. In such cases, profoundly important decisions were made that affected other church members, many of whom were not allowed to speak or vote in matters that concerned their welfare or ability to serve. In time, however, a more democratic spirit generally prevailed, a spirit that some scholars have noted has been at work in the Church since the American Revolution.[1233]

The fact that some congregations gradually became inter-racial indicated that change had come. Some conservative churches changed in greater degree and with more rapidity than those which were ostensibly liberal. The reality of this change was not always acknowledged, yet Mississippian Presbyterians did change. In the second decade of the 21st century, it remained to be seen whether the state and its churches would find greater

[1231] A.A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration," *Presbyterian Review* 2 (April 1881): 225-260; see also B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927): 425.

[1232] Ligon Duncan, "Foreword" to Lucas, *For a Continuing* Church, x.

[1233] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 3-46, 162-88.

congruity with the wider American nation as well as the global expressions of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches—denominational families that, in many ways, reflected in their debates, the discussions that Mississippi Presbyterians were having on a local level.

In its earliest form, Southern Christianity—or, better, Christianity in the South—had challenged the power structures of society. In 1800, the first white missionaries to Mississippi had come in ministry to the Indians, interceding on behalf of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations when the federal government sought to remove them from their ancestral lands. In the first three decades of the 19th century, almost all Southern Christians had rested uneasy with slaveholding, passing resolutions calling for it to end, and some, such as Claiborne County's David Hunt, freeing slaves in their wills. Many supported efforts (however paternalistic or unrealistic) to send freed slaves "back" to an Africa that the living generation of African-lineage slaves in America had never known.

But as the power of slave owners grew, so did their influence in the churches. In 1836, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. voted "to postpone indefinitely" all discussion of the slavery issue, and in 1857 and 1861, the Old and New School Presbyterian bodies had come apart over renewed questions about the morality of slaveholding and loyalty to the federal union. Indeed, it was the great controversy over slavery that marked the genesis of that peculiarly Southern understanding of religion, and it was Southern churchmen—most of them Presbyterians—who then put forward the philosophical and intellectual arguments used by the defenders of slavery and the Confederate cause. So devoted were Presbyterians in the South to such ideas that the final General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States said in 1864—shortly before the fall of the Confederacy on the battlefields of Virginia—that, "The peculiar mission of the Southern Church is to conserve the institution of slavery, and to make it a blessing to both master and slave."

The Church was not merely influenced by its surrounding culture—it became a buttress for it. It served the economic and political interests of its wealthiest segment—that cohort of Southerners who owned slaves—even though slave owners were a minority of the population and of the Presbyterian Church's membership. This is not to say that Presbyterians in the South did not attempt to minister to slaves in their midst. Some of their work was admirable. But such efforts were at best sporadic and reached only a tiny portion of the bondspeople. This work was also done (and had to be done) in total deference to the wishes and restrictions imposed by the owners, never addressing what must have the slaves' deepest human desire: the desire to be free.

In the way the antebellum Southern Church could have helped the slaves most—in the way it early hoped to serve them—it was silent on the basis of a politically and economically-influenced theology and a marked change (after 1836) in its interpretation of scripture. Certainly, Christians elsewhere could be faulted, but history has not been kind in its judgment of Christians in the Southern states, a Christianity in which Southern Presbyterians, with only a few dissenters, such as Columbus, Mississippi's James A. Lyon, were the acknowledged intellectual leaders. It took a century and more after Lee and Grant met at Appomattox Court House for Mississippi Presbyterians to come to terms with these facts.

As time went forward, Presbyterians took pride in their moral rectitude, and the oft-repeated compliment of others that they "exercised an influence far beyond their numbers." Almost all Mississippians were either Baptist or Methodist. The ministers of these two denominations had broad appeal to those, who, like themselves, often did not have access to wide educational opportunities or the chance to become rich by their labor. These ministers and their churches understood the religious needs of ordinary people and ministered according to their understanding. They were effective, working among Black and white alike in their separate, racially-aligned organizations.

The various Presbyterian denominations in Mississippi after the Civil War and into the 20th century: PCUS, Cumberland Presbyterian, A.R.P. and Presbyterian U.S.A.—were usually respected in their local communities. A Mississippi-born Presbyterian minister was part of a relatively small subset of persons who had traveled several hundred miles beyond his place of birth for education. The simple dignity of a Presbyterian service and the thoughtful, prepared sermons that Presbyterian ministers delivered won friends for their churches. Presbyterians were leaders in their localities and were often consulted on larger questions. Their ideas were respected, and other churches aspired to duplicate the educational attainments of their ministers.

Presbyterians, both African American and white, by virtue of their defined theology and respect for

organization, contributed to the cultural cohesiveness of the postbellum South. This contribution was almost entirely conservative, yet the work-ethic and respect for learning it conveyed laid the groundwork for change. This groundwork might have worked to greater effect had not inexorable social and economic forces caused so many Presbyterians, with others, to move away from their traditional, rural, and small-town locations, with so many departing the state.

Despite the fact that it cannot be said that the Church—either in its white or African American embodiments—carried the main thrust of the 20th century civil rights movement, in many cases, it may have been the churches (even those that ostensibly opposed the civil rights movement) that effectively undermined the most aggressive forms of racism, principally by demurring to lead campaigns of massive resistance, decrying violence in whatever form, appealing for calm and, finally, urging compliance with the law. Presbyterians, with their orderly form of government and carefully formulated theology, valued a stable society. Proponents of civil rights would rightly say that most white churches deserved faint praise, though the PCUS did speak out as early as the 1930s, but in the context of the time, even the most courageous were often at a loss as to how best to proceed. Only occasionally did Mississippi Presbyterians become so defensive (as during the church visit campaigns of the 1960s) that they harmed their own cause.

Even though the Mississippi churches debated the race issue, the locus of action was with the politicians, business leaders, and even more with the courts. It is doubtful that presbyteries and synods, nor even the pronouncements of the General Assembly, had a significant effect on the thinking of the average church member in the PCUS. The subject matter of discussion is necessarily different in the higher governing bodies of churches, resulting in the oft-repeated charge that even though their membership was chosen on a representational basis, they were somehow "out-of-touch," alien to local congregations. But the church bodies were remote, and since the Presbyterians of the state were resistant and their politicians recalcitrant, it was natural that the matter of desegregation would be adjudicated through the federal courts.

The great crisis faced by Christian people in Mississippi during the 20th century was the crisis of race, and in many ways, the Church failed in this task. As Carolyn Renée Dupont wrote, "Mississippi needed an ethos that reconciled segregation's fundamental ironies and contradictions while rendering its follies believable; it demanded a belief system that forestalled possibilities to envision an alternate racial structure. Mississippi's brand of evangelicalism, with its dogged emphasis on personal salvation, its individualistic understanding of sin, and its devotion to a literalist hermeneutic served these needs well. In Mississippi these specific hallmarks of evangelical faith did not develop accidentally or thrive coincidentally." Mississippi's white Christians did not run from questions of morality, said Dupont; rather, "they engaged them consciously, frontally, and eagerly, but their careful structuring of these concerns kept segregation from appearing in any catalogue of sins." Segregation, when it was defended, was said to be, like slavery of old, either morally neutral or, according to some, a positive good. Attacks from without only solidified the resolve of segregationist Mississippi Presbyterians to maintain their positions. For a time after the racial crises of the 1960s, Presbyterians worshiped in denominations that were neatly aligned for or against interpretations of scripture that addressed societal implications of race. Still, over time, the racist defense of segregation was decoupled from Southern evangelical understandings of scripture.[1234]

This is not to say that in earlier times the white churches did not reach out to African Americans. Some work was done but was paternalistic. It was pursued as a charitable effort, with no hint of social equality for its recipients. African Americans were not consulted as strategies were formulated, or the work carried out. But Presbyterian missionaries on the foreign field charged that the good that was done by raising money and interest for their work through missions conferences and special offerings was negated by the indignities and inequalities perpetuated among African Americans at home. Ironically, as Mississippi faced its greatest crisis since the Civil War, the

[1234] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 35; R. Milton Winter, "Review of Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2013)," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 93 (Fall/Winter 2015): 77-78.

Presbyterian Churches held together. It was only after almost all other Mississippi institutions desegregated that the PCUS began to break apart.

William F. Winter, who chaired the Synod of Mississippi's Special Judicial Committee after the Rev. Robert H. Walkup accepted a call to Texas, recalled later, that "It is not overstating it to say that Jackson, Mississippi was ground zero not only in the battle over segregation but also in the theological schisms that ultimately split the Southern Presbyterian Church." Winter said that, "As a secular politician in those turbulent days, I found myself in many tense, heated political debates, but I must tell you that some of the bitterest and most hateful rhetoric that I ever heard was over theological hair-splitting issues in presbytery and synod meetings here in Jackson. But I later realized that those issues were really grounded in race."

Other than Winter and a few others who spoke out for change, most racially progressive persons of the era chose or were forced to leave the state. Among white Presbyterians, too many devoted themselves to preservation of the old ways, often linking conservative theology with a commitment to segregation, so that the wider Church's witness on behalf of human equality under God was seriously compromised.[1235]

Numan V. Bartley has commented that, "In the most fundamental sense, even those Southern Christians who did come to the support of the Supreme Court failed to accomplish a real confrontation between the Church and white supremacy, [for] denominational resolutions and sermons delivered from the pulpit often spoke of obedience to the law and maintenance of civil order and not to the moral imperatives of Christians in a segregated society." Will Campbell indeed wrote that, "For the health of our own souls, it might have been better if the Supreme Court had not ruled favorably in 1954 on the subject of race. . . . Then we would have been forced to speak, if we spoke at all, from the vantage point of the Christian gospel. We would have been required to say: 'Thus saith the Lord! Not, Thus saith the Law!'"[1236]

Historians such as Dupont have been severe in their assessments. She wrote that, "Changes eventually came to Mississippi and to other parts of America, but it seems something other than the demands of Christianity produced that transformation. Moreover, the specific theological commitments of Mississippians formed essential tools in the arsenal with which they deflected the religious critique of segregation." Dupont believed that "Moral suasion proved one of the least effective and most readily circumvented strategies, especially where whites' heavy investments in the racial hierarchy benefited them so stupendously," and that, "to the extent that the racial structure changed, these transformations owed little to adjustments in white Mississippians' moral or religious convictions."

Indeed, the denominational divisions in the PCUS, which followed the civil rights struggles, with the affirmation of segregation in some of the promotional materials published by the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church to lay the foundation for this withdrawal, indicates that some conservatives still adhered to segregation as a social and religious arrangement they were still willing to defend, and which they believed should be preserved. Again, as Dupont observed, "Resistance to black equality from white communities of faith persisted long after the end of *de jure* segregation and well after high-profile civil rights activity ceased."

As we have seen, the matter of race was but one of many that confronted Mississippi Presbyterians, and for this reason, other issues became bound up with the race question in peculiar, troubling ways. In time, the issues of race and doctrinal orthodoxy came to be judged in their own spheres, and steps toward reconciliation began. The unfolding of these events has been remarkable. It is likely, however, that this task, if pursued with conviction and vigor, will take some time to complete. In Mississippi the Church sought to bring healing to the scars created by the Civil War and racism—"a determination" which, as William G. McAtee has remarked, was "very difficult for whites alone to judge."[1237]

In 1972, the Synod of Mississippi appointed a Committee on Reconciliation, which sponsored gatherings for discussion among its members and offered help to those who experienced the ecclesiastical upheavals leading up to the largest division of American Presbyterians since the Civil War. Members of the synod were invited to

[1235] William F. Winter, Sermon delivered at Fondren Presbyterian Church, July 6, 2014.

[1236] Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance,* revised edition, 304; Will D. Campbell, *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962): 5.

[1237] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 198, 13; McAtee, *Dreams*, 294.

record their impressions, some of which were published. These helped objectify the causes of the Church's unhappiness and offered ways to overcome differences. W. Marion McGough, an elder in Greenville, Mississippi's First Church, cited Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* to observe that while change is often accompanied by friction, change itself did not cause friction.

Rather, he said that "friction arises from the different rates of acceleration with which we change." Mississippi's religion had indeed changed and would change further. But as Belhaven's Walter Elwell observed, there was a gap about two generations wide in what constituted a "conservative" and a "moderate" among the state's Presbyterians. This was in part because, as South Carolina Presbyterian elder James McBride Dabbs, put it, the Southerner "daily . . . becomes more American." Mississippi's PCUS-PCA-EPC divisions were for all parties involved, part of an "Americanizing" process, as Presbyterians in the state moved *at different rates* toward incorporation of ideas held in wider spheres of the Church's life and work. In truth, many of the pressures Mississippi Presbyterians felt came also from the international Church, as the protests against segregation by missionaries on the foreign field made clear.[1238]

In 1983, the Southern-based Presbyterian Church in the United States reunited with the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a union pursued, in part, to heal a divide that had occurred 122 years before. The reunion was not greeted with the general approval that the secession of the Mississippi presbyteries had received in 1861. In the decade preceding this union, nearly half of Mississippi's PCUS congregations—many fearing the union that had come to pass—had left their historic ecclesiastical home to join the Presbyterian Church in America, a denomination that was at first called the Continuing (Southern) Presbyterian Church. A few years later, still more Mississippi Presbyterians left the newly formed PCUSA to join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. These actions illustrated that organizational consensus was never in the genius of Presbyterianism. As the Rev. W. H. Irvine, pastor of the Shelby Presbyterian Church, had wryly noted in a sermon before North Mississippi Presbytery, April 13, 1938, that "Presbyterians subscribe to a high doctrine of the Church in their standards [but] in actual practice we modify our position."

The Magnolia State's ecclesiastical realignments came in an era when social and political change was spreading rapidly across many fronts, often occurring in disorderly, tumultuous ways. Many found this unsettling, and in Mississippi, far from Presbyterianism's centers of strength, some church leaders made a last stand against change. While Mississippi could not consider secession from the federal union, some of its Presbyterians and other conservative Protestants did secede from their denominational bodies—as they saw it—to protect deeply-held values, some of them tinged with racial prejudice. The Synod of Mississippi, one of the smaller in the PCUS, suffered a numerical greater loss than any other synod in the divisions of the 1970s and '80s.

As with the PCUS-Presbyterian U.S.A. division that persisted after the Civil War, secular influences also came into play. In the 20th century, the divisions were partly geographic but became ever-more ideological. PCA partisans emphasized what they believed was the Church's historic theology, while the PCUSA emphasized reformulating and restating religious truths in contemporary idiom; also, to a greater or lesser degree, embracing such values as diversity and social inclusion. By the 21st century, as in the 1840s and '50s, Mississippi Presbyterians existed in five denominational families. Almost forgotten at times were the few African American congregations—sturdy and loyal in their desire to be part of the Presbyterian Church—an overwhelmingly white religious body, which had not always wished to include them or value their contributions.[1239]

Presbyterians could not rest easily with either the attainments or shortcomings of their history. The best way forward seemed to be activity to extend the love and justice of the gospel to those it had slighted in the past. Former Governor and Presbyterian elder William Winter told a Mississippi congregation in 2000 that,

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[1238] "Some Presbyterian Reflections on Reconciliation in Mississippi in 1972" (Jackson: Synod of Mississippi, 1972), 39; James McBride Dabbs, *Who Speaks for the South?* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1964), vii.

[1239] The five denominational traditions of the 1840s and '50s were the Old and New School branches of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Cumberland Presbyterian and A.R.P. communions, as well as the two small Mississippi outposts of the South Carolina's piedmont's Independent Presbyterian denomination. The two Mississippi congregations were located near Caledonia and Hamilton.

As a member of the President's Advisory Board on Race last year, I had the unique opportunity to look at this country as few people get to do. I went to 26 states and visited people of all races and ethnic backgrounds. . . . Wherever I went, irrespective of racial and cultural differences, I found that people agreed on several very basic propositions. This is what everybody agreed on: everybody wants a decent education for their children; everybody wants a fair chance to secure a job that will sustain them and their family; everybody wants to be able to live in a decent house on a safe street; everybody wants access to adequate health care; and everybody wants to be treated with dignity and respect.

Surely these are not unreasonable aspirations for people getting ready to live in the 21st century. Surely, we can find a way to make these hopes a reality. But all of us have to be involved in achieving these results. We can't just leave it to the government, although the government must continue with wise and constructive policies. You and I as individuals have to help make it happen. . . . We talk a lot about our religious and political heritage which we have inherited from our forebears. . . . This is how we honor that heritage—by creating a society that is not forever riven by racial antagonisms and division.

Here are some other things we can do that won't cost us anything and that each one of us will get satisfaction and joy from doing—things that will speed the day when we really do have one community and one state and one country and that will be true to our Christian faith: we can go out of our way to really get to know people of other races—that process enriches all of us; when people say or do things that are clearly racially biased whether from blacks or whites, we must speak out against them; we can be aware of our own racial blind spots and stereotypes; we can participate in community efforts to reduce racial prejudice; we can become informed about the concerns of people of other races; and we can make a personal commitment to the elimination of racism whenever and however it exists. . . .

We must remember that we are all in this together. Regardless of where we came from or what we look like or what our cultural and ethnic and religious differences are, we must remember that we were all made by the same God, the Lord and Father of us all.[1240]

Anticipating 21st century religious futurists such as Phyllis Tickle, Samuel S. Hill Jr. wrote in 1999 that, "Each time there is a revolution in the area of knowledge—such as we have seen over the last 400 years—the relation [between religion and culture] must be reappraised." Several years later, the Rev. Darryl G. Hart, a respected conservative historian of Calvinism and culture, extended a parallel reminder that the Church should be modest in assessing its attainments. He wrote that, "Although Calvinism [has] sustained people through a variety of hardships, its appeal, even in its most vigorous and successful phases, was always subdued." Calvinism was successful in the settlement period of America, as well as in some developing countries during the missionary period, most notably Korea. Yet, one must ask if the timely questions and answers that Calvinism considered—some born in the Bible and the life of the early Church, others in the struggles of the Protestant Reformation, English Puritanism, and 17th century European scholasticism, were as universal and enduring as they were once thought to be? Or were the Presbyterian Churches called to consider ideas and questions not previously proposed? [1241]

Seventeenth century Calvinism did not anticipate a world in which many or most were not Christian. The Protestant Reformation was an epic struggle within Christendom. Various nationalities were involved, and the Reformers sought to influence but were also subject to the decision of kings and princes. But the Reformation did not involve a struggle among racial groups as such. It did not occur in the context of slaveholding or its aftermath. These and other matters did arise in 20th century Mississippi, and Presbyterians struggled to find guidance from their tradition.

One of the consequences of the Reformation and the Enlightenment as well as American evangelicalism was the focus on the individual. For many, there was little awareness that in 20th century society, people were not

[1240] Talk given at Grace Chapel Presbyterian Church, Madison (July 30, 2000), excerpted from Andrew P. Mullins Jr., *The Measure of Our Days: Writings of William F. Winter*, 96.

[1241] Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 181; D. G. Hart, *Calvinism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013): 298.

simply Christians or not, but also that they were participants in a sinful social order. The prevailing definition of a Christian was private and individualistic. A Christian said prayers, read the Bible, went to church, was faithful to spouse and family, and was given neither to profanity, nor gambling, nor drunkenness. All of this was surely true, but as John Leith remarked, such an individualistic definition of Christian duty, "allowed a Christian to be irresponsible in business, social, and political life." He urged, "No Calvinist can for long be content with a pietistic definition of a Christian. For Calvin intended not simply that individuals should be Christians, but that Geneva [that is, the society] should be Christian." The same could be said of the Scots Presbyterians and the English Puritans.[1242]

In many ways, the crises Mississippi Presbyterians faced in the early 21st century were those they had seen before, only in greater degree. The Church in Mississippi was utterly unprepared for the movement toward urbanization that characterized the state's growth in the later 20th century, although many gave their work to establishing new congregations for the growing suburbs of the rising metropolitan areas. Yet as people became more mobile, the expense of following their residential shifts, was substantial. Studies showed that each time a family moved, the less likely it was to unite with a new local church. Presbyterians were able to retain only a fraction of their people. Students at university no longer felt constrained by societal or ecclesiastical sanctions to embrace or adhere to the teachings of their own churches or even to Christianity itself. Perhaps as a tribute to the ecumenical movement, denominational loyalty faded, and it was also in this period that researchers first noted a significant rise in the average age of Presbyterian members. Presbyterians were challenged to mobilize the skill and creativity needed to attract new members in an era when there was much more competition—religious and secular—for people's interest and attention. The task was daunting even for the most ardent church planters.

The 21st century church faces immense challenges. In the first decades of the 21st century, as in the later 20th century, significant declines in church participation were noted among almost all American religious groups. A Pew Research Poll in 2014 found that many fewer people identified as Christian compared with a similar study in 2007. Self-described "nones" increased from 16 to 23% of American adults, and those who reported belief in God declined from 70 to 61% in the same period. Declines in the South were lower but were still ominous. Even those who claimed loyalty to their church or house of worship were likely to attend less frequently, making it more difficult for congregations to carry out their ministries. Some preferred to watch a religious service on television; others found their spiritual nurture via books or the Internet. A large percentage of Americans claimed to be spiritual but not religious. More liberal members of the PCUSA sometimes found that their closest allies were persons who had ceased to identify personally with organized religion, some having been alienated or offended by the Church, others discouraged by its ongoing controversies, and some who, frankly, believed they could do better ethically apart from what they saw as the narrow and exclusionary attitudes of the Church. The question for church folk became, how best to achieve reconciliation or to make common cause with such persons.[1243]

Mississippi Presbyterians, while increasingly open to adaptation and innovation, were sometimes unable to keep pace with rapid change. The Presbyterian form of church government, much like the federal legislative process, was designed to foster deliberation. The system of checks and balances in both constitutions was placed to prevent precipitous action. Questions were raised whether the many-layered legislative process in the Church could keep up with the need for adaptation and innovation caused new lines of theological insight, rapidly changing social conditions, and demographic shifts.

Perhaps the greatest loss occurred among the few Mississippi congregations—largely rural—that had carried on as exclusively African American communities, although there were signs of a more inclusive racial setting in the predominately white churches of Jackson and the university towns. The decline in numbers among rural African American churches was for the same reason as among their white rural counterparts, although the difficulties may have been more pressing for African Americans. Young people moved away to seek education and employment, and so the country churches faded. Any increase in the number of African American Presbyterians in Mississippi, while never large, did not seem promising, though new ways of reaching out—this time, on the basis of social and

[1242] John H. Leith, author's class notes, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, September 1979.

[1243] *Christian Century* 132 (December 9, 2015): 16-17.

spiritual parity—were considered. Presbyterians also began modestly conceived outreaches to Korean American and Hispanic persons who were represented in the state at several locations. Still, in most locales, Mississippi Presbyterian congregations remained remarkably homogenous in terms of race, local theological consensus, and economic status.

At the time of this writing, the majority of the state's college graduates still leave Mississippi, so that cynics have averred that the less spent on education, the better, as lesser amounts of education will keep more of the region's young people at home. Presbyterians have not embraced such thinking, pointing to high rates of poverty, crime, and disorganized home life that inevitably accompany poorly educated population cohorts. Yet, as with Chinese people and Jews, early immigrants who worked to obtain a good education for their children in the hope of social and economic advancement, it is probable that the children of Presbyterians, including African American Presbyterians, along with those of Chinese persons and Jews, have left Mississippi in greater percentages than their population shares. As a result, there are no longer Chinese churches, as well as many fewer active synagogues and temples, just as there are fewer Presbyterian churches.

Not all the perceived religious decline has been from lack of interest in core values; indeed, a great deal is likely because of it. The same will be true of the other important religious communions in Mississippi—Jewish, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, and Baptist—white as well as Black. Different factors in those bodies will show the patterns of religious migration to be occurring in greater or lesser degree, while those churches that appear to be flourishing may prove to be those that are most amenable to the social, economic, and cultural realities of Mississippi as they presently exist.

In spite of changes, African American persons have not gravitated toward the liberal, predominately white churches in remarkable numbers, though perhaps this is not the point. If the predominately white churches have helped create an environment that has assisted African American persons find a better life, then the hopes of their members may have been realized, at least in a partial way. Indeed, it may be that the benefit of these changes, as with an openness to racial integration, has had more to do with reconciling the personal attitudes and consciences of longstanding church members than in reaching out to those who are different than the majority in terms race or color. The Church's principal work in these areas may presently be to plant seeds for harvest in future generations.

Some have predicted that by some future date—say, 2050—there will be no more Presbyterians. Yet, Phyllis Tickle, a writer well-acquainted with Mississippi Presbyterians and the American South, has argued that a once-every-500-year reshaping of religion is now under way, a reshaping in which new strengths for the Church will emerge. Tickle and others assert that old categories such as fundamentalist *versus* modernist or evangelical *versus* liberal will recede, but that some of the more adaptable forms of religious expression, such as ritual, spiritual disciplines, interaction with other believers, and outreach to the oppressed or needy, will maintain their traditional place. Religion's role in the larger society would likely be reduced, but where it was seen, its adherents would be more committed. Futurists predicted a role for Presbyterians, albeit in different configurations but with wider visions and transformed patterns of activity, and if not with organizational oneness, then with creativity and hopefulness for God's people and the world.[1244]

[1244] Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: What It Is, Where It is Going, and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012); see also James H. Moorhead, "Is Mainstream Protestantism in Decline*?" Journal of Presbyterian History* 84 (Spring-Summer 2006): 67-76.

Appendix

Palmer of New Orleans: "Big Villain of the Play"[1245]— A Southern Journey from Slavery and Secession Toward Justice and Racial Reconciliation[1246]

by Robert Milton Winter

The blessing of longevity is one of life's most fortuitous occurrences, especially if one is in a place of influence for the unfolding. Benjamin Morgan Palmer (1818–1902) of New Orleans was pastor for 46 years of the city's large and influential First Presbyterian Church—for much of his life Southern Presbyterianism's largest congregation and also one of its wealthiest. Palmer was numbered among the lions of the church, as the parlance of the day would have it, and was among the last of the Southern denomination's Civil War founders—honored and accorded almost reverential respect until the last days of his life. In the years after the war, during which he occupied the pulpit of the great church his people built for him for the longest part of his ministry (1865–1902), visitors from the North would go to hear him—recalling how his oratory had galvanized the Confederacy—hoping to see "the big villain of the play."[1247] In 1866, the Rev. Henry J. Van Dyke, one of the North's most respected pulpiteers and a critic of abolitionism, invited Palmer to preach in his church when he was in New York for a wedding. A startled worshiper who heard Palmer's sermon but did not know his identity until after the service exclaimed, "The Arch–Rebel? Why he preaches like an archangel."[1248]

Palmer's sermons did not disappoint.[1249] As the years passed, he assumed the role of "the Confederacy's chief apologist and defender." As historian James O. Farmer Jr. has said, "He raised the function of the clergy as ennobler and defender of southern traditions." Farmer acknowledges Palmer as the greatest among the ministers who conducted this much lauded effort.[1250] All agreed that he was fully the master of his audience, holding great

[1245] A paper presented at a symposium in April 2019, when Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, officially renamed its oldest and most prominent building, Palmer Hall, to Southwestern Hall. The Board of Trustees voted to remove the name of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, a 19th century theologian who vehemently defended slavery and segregation, as his legacy was found to be "fundamentally at odds" with the college's values.

[1246] The substance of this paper is derived from the author's recently published three-volume history of Presbyterians in Mississippi—*Outposts of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians in the Nineteenth Century* (Memphis: Alphagraphics, 2014) and *Citadels of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians, 1900-2016*, 2 vols. (Memphis: Alphagraphics, 2016).

[1247] R. Q. Mallard, "Personal Reminiscences of Rev. Benj. Morgan Palmer, D.D., LL.D., *Union Seminary Review* 14 (January 1903): 111.

[1248] Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906): 295.

[1249] See sermons by Palmer in *Southern Presbyterian Pulpit: Classic Nineteenth Century Sermons* (Port St. Lucie, Fla.: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008).

[1250] Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 117.

congregations in his thrall and able to ride the thunder of his great voice and with both an intellect and felicity for words that no other preacher of that long generation was able to command. Now, two centuries after his birth, we have some distance to assess his work and consider how best to interpret his legacy.

Birth and Background

In a real sense, Benjamin Morgan Palmer was destined for his calling. The son, grandson, and nephew of Presbyterian ministers, he was born January 25, 1818, in Charleston, South Carolina, a mature nexus of thoughtful, self-possessed men and women knit together in a complex web of kindred and affinity that made South Carolina a center of vital Presbyterianism second only to Edinburgh or Princeton. They were leaders of church and state, prominent in the fields of law, medicine, and religion. Many were planters also. For his part, before the war, Palmer was a professor at his alma mater, Columbia Theological Seminary,[1251] and pastor of Columbia's First Presbyterian Church, bringing together the two most important posts next to the governor in that important Southern city.[1252] He would make his mark well before his middle age. By age 40, he had become a force to be reckoned with in the affairs of his church and the nation.

Palmer was born into a privileged society a "slaveocracy," as historians term it—and was comfortable among those who meant to preserve this way of life, even to the point of secession from the United States and war against their kinspeople. He was happy to lead them and to justify their choices, even in the long decades after their defeat. He was not ignorant of those whom he opposed. His parents were New Englanders who had moved to South Carolina. His father, Edward Palmer, had gone from Charleston to Amherst College in Massachusetts to prepare for the ministry. Edward Palmer returned to South Carolina in 1824, where he served churches until 1874.

When ready for college at age 14, Benjamin also chose Amherst, where he spent two years (1832-1834) in a region and an era where abolitionism was rising to full voice. There, he became friends with New Englanders including Henry Ward Beecher. In 1841, he accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia,[1253] and that same year, he married Augusta McConnell, the stepdaughter of Columbia Seminary professor George Howe. Through her mother, Augusta was related to one of Georgia's prominent slaveholding families.[1254]

Palmer's Intellectual Circle

Though their culture was supported by the labor slaves, thoughtful South Carolinians sometimes raised questions about it. As late as 1858, the Rev. John B. Adger (1810-1899), close to the Palmer clan, raised his voice against re-opening the slave trade. Palmer's circle, like so many well-positioned Carolinians—contra Calhoun—cherished pro-Union sentiments. But as positions hardened, Palmer became both a secessionist and an apologist for slaveholding. The introduction of long-staple cotton and the invention of the cotton gin had changed the economics of agriculture as well as the way Southerners read the Bible and its teaching about slavery. No longer willing to see it as an evil to be gradually done away with, many began to teach that the South's "peculiar institution" was a providential good, instituted by God for the well-being of both master and slave; thus, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had resolved in 1836 that discussion of the whole matter be "indefinitely postponed."

[1251] Columbia Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church was established in 1828 at Lexington, South Carolina and moved to Columbia in 1830. It moved to Decatur, Georgia, in 1927.

[1252] The church in which Palmer preached still stands near the state capitol. Woodrow Wilson's father was one of the church's post-war pastors. The president's parents are buried in the cemetery.

[1253] Not to be confused with the older Independent Presbyterian Church of the same city, dating from colonial times, which has throughout its history abstained from affiliation with any higher governing body, regarding its elders as a "parochial presbytery."

[1254] Erskine Clarke, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer," *South Carolina Encyclopedia* (online edition), http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/ entries/palmer-benjamin-morgan/Accessed 12.24.18.

Men like Palmer rose to slavery's defense, believing, as Palmer would later say, that unless slavery's territory was expanded, abolitionists would have their way.

Nineteenth-century Presbyterians were, by all measures, conservative. Even the Church's more liberal wing, the so-called New School, diverged only in timid fashion from historic Calvinistic orthodoxy. Initially willing to criticize slavery, it too yielded to pressures to maintain its unity at the expense of critique. Presbyterians were content to leave the more radical departures from the old creeds to Congregationalists, Unitarians, and Universalists—most situated far away in New England. In the South, Presbyterians were few, but comprised a tight-knit circle of kinship and affinity, with a small coterie of highly articulate leaders exercising great influence and maintaining tight control over church affairs.

Palmer's Early Ministry was Orthodox

Palmer early established himself as sufficiently conservative to move comfortably in an orthodox religious body: the Old School Presbyterian Church, with which most Southern Presbyterians were connected.[1255] In 1843, he was called to the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, and in 1849, during his pastorate there, he published a small book entitled *Social Dancing Inconsistent with a Christian Profession and Baptismal Vows*.[1256] It was hardly original; scores of Presbyterian ministers had published similar volumes. But it belied a certain way with words, a talent that would make its writer famous as the years passed. (Among the other popular themes to which Presbyterian controversialists of the time gave themselves were defenses of infant baptism and the doctrine of predestination.) He also was critical of new methods of scientific investigation, the so-called "scientific method," suggested by the writings of Francis Bacon. In 1852, he ridiculed the new science, charging before the literary society of Davidson College that "the dapper infidelity of our day" reads the world's chronology in millions and billions of years "just as calmly as though God had never written a book in which was set down the age of man." He placed the Bible and scientific method on the same plane. If there was a contradiction, one or the other was wrong. Either the Bible would correct science, or light from research would alter the interpretation of scripture.[1257] Although many others with conservative theological views within the span of his long life altered their views of science and scripture, Palmer never changed his.

Palmer's preaching skills, as well as his scholarly acumen, attracted attention. In 1851, he was appointed examiner in ancient languages, including Hebrew, of candidates for ordination in the presbytery—this in an era in which ordinands were expected to present learned papers demonstrating their ability to read Hebrew and Greek, as well as a written thesis in Latin on some doctrinal subject. In 1854, he was appointed professor of ecclesiastical history and polity at Columbia Seminary.

Palmer Embraces "New" Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church

Benjamin Morgan Palmer is often compared to James Henley Thornwell (1812-1862), six years his senior, his friend and colleague in Columbia Seminary, and his academic and ecclesiastical mentor. Thornwell, who hailed from South Carolina's upcountry, had taught in South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina),

[1255] American Presbyterians divided in 1837 into "Old" and "New Schools," with the two groups becoming four as the Civil War began. Under the pressures of war, the Old and New Schools in the South, reunited in 1864, and the two Northern bodies came together in 1870. These two remained separate until 1983, when the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was formed.

[1256] Benjamin Morgan Palmer, **"**Social Dancing Inconsistent with a Christian Profession and Baptismal Vows: a sermon, preached in the [First] Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S.C., June 17, 1849" (Columbia: Office of *The South Carolinian*, 1849). Although the Church's *Larger Catechism* (Q. 139) condemned only "lascivious dancings," Victorian-era Presbyterians frowned upon dancing that involved multiple partners, e.g., the sort of dancing that took place at balls. Exercises such as the "Virginia Reel" were among those entertainments that the Church, then, believed both Scripture and its Confessions called sin.

[1257] B. M. Palmer, "Baconism and the Bible," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 6 (October 1852): 250-52.

and also served as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. He had also taught in the Presbyterian Seminary (whose theological professorship was then viewed as the premier role of the three). "New doctrines" among Presbyterians were rare, but South Carolina Presbyterians Thomas Smyth (1808-1873), pastor of Charleston's Second Presbyterian Church, and Thornwell in the 1830s and '40s had fashioned a doctrine that came to be called "the Spirituality of the Church." This was viewed by many as a radical departure from the long-held tenets of Calvinism and classical English and New England Puritanism. The older tenets held that the Church had everything to do with the operation of a Christian society, but this new teaching more or less now restricted it to conversion of individuals for salvation[1258] and the cultivation of personal piety. Christians, as individuals, or through societies formed outside the bounds of the Church, might petition or engage with the civil magistrate, but the Church, as the *Church*, would studiously avoid "political questions," lest it be distracted from its singular mission and exalted calling in the salvation of souls, a sacred work that no other body could perform.

Charles Hodge (1797–1878), an Old School leader and professor of theology in Princeton Seminary, agreed that the Church had no "right to interfere in secular matters," yet he said there were times "when political questions rise into the sphere of morals and religion." Hodge expressed amazement at what he called Thornwell's "new and startling doctrine on the church." He exclaimed that if Thornwell was correct, it meant "that Presbyterians, neither in this country nor in Europe, have ever understood their own system." Hodge and other critics noted wryly that the South Carolinians' new doctrine came at such a time as to excuse the Church from addressing moral issues arising from slavery.[1259]

Undeterred by objections, Thornwell asserted that the Church "is not a moral institute of universal good, whose business it is to wage war upon every form of human ill. . . . It has no commission to construct society afresh . . . to change the forms of its political constitution. . . .The problems, which the anomalies of our fallen state are continually forcing on philanthropy, the Church has no right directly to solve." The Church, he insisted, "is a spiritual body," and it was not the business of the Church to build asylums for the insane, to promote temperance societies, or to serve as "a contrivance for every species of reform—individual, social, [or] political." Indeed, "The Church . . .has a fixed and unalterable Constitution; and that Constitution is the Word of God. . . . She can announce what it teaches, enjoin what it commands, [and] prohibit what it condemns. . . . Beyond the Bible she can never go, and apart from the Bible she can never speak." As Thornwell wrote in an article on "The Church and Slavery," where the biblical texts are silent, "it is her duty to put her finger on her lips."[1260] Such ideas Southern leaders such as Palmer were only too happy to embrace, and they molded and perpetuated them after Thornwell's early death.

Presbyterians such as Palmer who followed Thornwell's ideas asserted that slavery was a purely civil and domestic relation on which the Church had no right to legislate. But many questioned this interpretation of the doctrine of the Church's spirituality, claiming it opposed the spirit and genius of Calvinism. They cited Knox's actions in Scotland and support for the American Revolution as instances of Presbyterian political involvement.[1261] Said Thornwell, "I do not exclude Slavery wholly and absolutely from the sphere of the Church. It has religious aspects. What I exclude is the question touching the manner in which society shall be organized. The relation of

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[1258] The idea calling for "conversion" of those born into Christian homes, baptized and reared in the bosom of the Church, has always rested uncomfortably with classical Calvinism, prompting an influential book from the pen of New Englander Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), entitled *Christian Nurture* (1847). For this reason, Samuel S. Hill Jr. has written "Presbyterianism in the South has lain a few degrees to the left of the central stream of its heritage." *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966): 75.

[1259] Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 36 (1864): 563; Charles Hodge, "The State of the Country," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 33 (1861): 1; Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 31 (1859): 617.

[1260] John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau, eds., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, 4 vols. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1871-73): 2:47; 382-84; 4:384.

[1261] Ernest Trice Thompson, *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961); John H. Leith, "Spirituality of the Church," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, edited by Samuel S. Hill and Charles Lippy, Second edition (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005): 759.

its classes and races, their respective rights and privileges, the position of woman, the equality or inequality of citizens,—these are questions which belong to the State. . . ."[1262]

With Thornwell, George Howe, Thomas Smyth, John B. Adger, John L. Girardeau, and others, Palmer in 1847 began *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, a quarterly to provide Southerners with a theological publication of elevated intellectual proportions. It published articles covering many subjects and reviewed books both sympathetic and opposed to the views of the editorial committee. Through this publication, both the seminary and Palmer gained a reputation that placed them among the leading thinkers of the U.S. and the Protestant educational enterprise.

One of Palmer's articles published in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* (1856), "The Import of Hebrew History," revealed a controlling idea in his thought. He believed that God, "to prevent admixture of races," had purposefully separated the various peoples following the divine frustration of the builders of Babel's Tower, so as to confirm the normative role of separation among the various human communities. He wrote that, "to prevent the admixture of races, these are separated by the occupancy of distant territory, by opposition of manners, employment and religion, and still more by the power of caste which, as now in India, clearly defined and rendered impassable the boundaries of social life." Here Palmer set forth a "law of separation" of races and peoples that he believed to be an everlasting principle in God's ordering of the world following the Noahic Flood.[1263]

A Call to the Crescent City

Presbyterianism of this era was a missionary enterprise, and ministers of the highest caliber, along with all the rest, were expected to go follow God to far corners of the earth to fulfill the Master's call to "go and preach the gospel." In 1846, the General Assembly's missions committee declared that it was not able to answer much more than a fourth of the calls for assistance—particularly in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. In Palmer's case, this involved in 1856, a call to the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans—a locale hardly primitive,[1264] yet a place barely Protestant for a Presbyterian man of letters, it was certainly not rich with the educational milieu of Calvinist South Carolina. It was a city of keelboats, cotton markets, French-speaking Catholics and—feared most of all—annual epidemics of yellow fever.[1265] The city's slave market, a pillar of the local economy, was just a few blocks from Palmer's church. Here, he would cultivate a growing audience, gaining confidence as a preacher and bringing ideas from other parts of the South to bear on the affairs of his new city and region. As a compensation for his sacrifice, the church offered him a salary of $6,000, said to be the highest for any preacher in the country in the decade before the Civil War.

It was in New Orleans that Palmer, like his friend Thornwell, would experience a turn of mind that would lead him to reject certain ideas that had guided his early years in the ministry—particularly the Thornwellian idea that the Church should steer clear of politics. Some have speculated that as the secessionist fires were rising, a meeting with the fiery Georgia secessionist Robert Toombs (1810–1885) may have influenced Palmer.[1266] In a

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[1262] James Henley Thornwell, "Speech on African Colonization," cited in Erskine Clarke, *Our Southern Zion: A History of Calvinism in the South Carolina Low Country, 1690-1990* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996): 213; cf., E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978): 111; Maddex, "From Theocracy to Spirituality," 438-57; Paul L. Garber, "A Centennial Appraisal of James Henley Thornwell," in *A Miscellany of American Christianity,* 114-25.

[1263] Benjamin M. Palmer, "The Import of Hebrew History," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 9 (April 1856): 582-610.

[1264] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:461.

[1265] Christopher M. Duncan has noted that Palmer seldom mentioned in his writings the seamy side of his city's life. Indeed, the Protestant community in the city lived apart and carefully held itself aloof from what some have called "this Southern Babylon." "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Southern Presbyterian Divine" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Auburn University, 2008). See Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

[1266] See Duncan, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Southern Presbyterian Divine," 127-32.

fast-day sermon on November 21, 1860, Thornwell preached to his congregation in Columbia, encouraging the South Carolina forces pushing for secession. For Palmer, the matter crystallized as, following the example of his mentor, he rose a week later to deliver his annual Thanksgiving Day sermon on November 29 in his massive Gothic Revival church in New Orleans' Lafayette Square.[1267]

"The South: Her Peril and Duty"

A man of medium size or slightly below it, Palmer was said to be unimposing in physical appearance—that is, until he began to preach. He spoke without notes, bringing "not even a scrap of paper into the pulpit." A hearer gave this description of his oratorical style:

> His voice is large, yet flexible; mellow, yet penetrating and sonorous. His whispers . . . can be heard anywhere in the large auditorium where he preaches. When in his leonine mood his voice swells and thunders . . . its inflections and cadences are very rich and varied; terrible and harsh in warning of Divine wrath; soft and tender and wooing in invitation to acceptance of Divine mercy; triumphal, and soaring and mighty in adoration.[1268]

On November 29, 1860, the church was filled to capacity. Perhaps 1,500—some said 2,000—crowded the pews of the main floor and wraparound galleries to learn what the great man would say with respect to events of the hour. This was Louisiana's oldest Protestant congregation, and even then, Palmer was regarded by many as the state's leading preacher. His sermon, entitled "The South: Her Peril and Duty," would only increase his fame. It would cement his place in history. It was, incidentally, one of the few sermons he read from a manuscript, so important to him was it that his wording be precise—and quotable.

Lincoln had won the White House on November 6. Four days later, both of South Carolina's senators had resigned their seats. On November 14, Alexander Stephens, future vice-president of the Confederacy, had addressed the Georgia legislature and counseled against secession. "Let the fanatics of the North break the Constitution, if that be their purpose." But the days of moderation were over: Four days later, the body authorized $1,000,0000 for weapons. On November 23, Major General Robert Anderson issued a report from Charleston that identified Fort Sumter as "key to the defense of the city's harbor." He believed secession was "a *fait accompli*." (South Carolina would secede on December 20.)

The two-hour sermon Palmer preached on that fateful Thursday was a bombshell. Southerners who had sought to keep the pulpit free from what were seen as "political deliverances" were astonished when Palmer departed from "the habit of a lifetime" and spoke to the issue of secession from his pulpit, justifying it upon the basis of "the grave situation" that confronted his state. Palmer, who had turned down an appointment to the faculty at Princeton Seminary, had not hesitated to express his love for the Union during the controversies of the 1850s. He said, "I have never intermeddled with political questions," but "at so solemn a juncture . . . it is not lawful to be still. Whoever may have influence to shape political opinion, at such a time must lend it or prove faithless to a trust as solemn as any to be accounted for at the bar of God." The sermon was so powerful that it was published in city newspapers as well as others around the South and in the church press.[1269] It was soon issued as a pamphlet[1270]

[1267] Samuel Wilson, F.A.I.A., *The First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Louisiana Landmarks Society, 1988): 33-35; Richard T. Hughes, "A Civic Theology for the South: The Case of Benjamin M. Palmer," *Journal of Church and State* 25 (1983): 447-67.

[1268] Johnson, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Become Nationalist," 429.

[1269] This was an era in which almost everyone read one or more church newspapers—most, if not all, under the influence of some highly regarded minister, but technically independent, and not speaking "for the Church" in an official capacity.

[1270] B. M. Palmer, "The South: Her Peril and Her Duty. A Discourse Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, November 29, 1860" (New Orleans: Printed at the office of *The True Witness and Sentinel*, 1860) [an independent regional Presbyterian newspaper]; B. M. Palmer, "Thanksgiving Sermon delivered at the First Presbyterian

that was widely circulated throughout the nation.[1271] The sermon was credited with swaying Louisiana to secede from the Union a month and a day after Palmer's home state.[1272]

Palmer advocated secession and, if necessary, resistance against the federal government "till the last man" had fallen, yet the greatest part of the sermon was a defense of slavery[1273] and a call for its preservation, indicating why, perhaps, so many were willing to justify secession and even to call for war. He asserted that to the South had been given "a providential trust . . . to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing." Turning aside abolitionist criticisms, he said,

> It is not necessary here to inquire whether this is precisely the best relation in which the hewer of wood and drawer of water can stand to his employer; although this proposition may perhaps be successfully sustained by those who choose to defend it. Still less are we required, dogmatically, to affirm that it will subsist through all time. . . . If this question should ever arise, the generation to whom it is remitted will doubtless have the wisdom to meet it, and Providence will furnish the lights in which it is to be resolved. All that we claim for them, for ourselves, is liberty to work out this problem, guided by nature and God, without obtrusive interference from abroad.

But then he asked,

> Need I pause to show how this system of servitude underlies and supports our material interests; that our wealth consists in our lands and in the serfs who till them; that from the nature of our products they can only be cultivated by labor which must be controlled in order to be certain; that any other than a tropical race must faint and wither beneath a tropical sun? Need I pause to show how this system is interwoven with our entire social fabric; that these slaves form parts of our households, even as our children; and that, too, through a relationship recognized and sanctioned in the Scriptures of God even as the other? Must I pause to show how it has fashioned our modes of life, and determined all our habits of thought and feeling, and molded the very type of our civilization? How then can the hand of violence be laid upon it without involving our existence?

Palmer characterized African Americans in this way:

Church of New Orleans, [November] 29, 1860" (New York: George F. Nesbit & Co., 1861), https://archive.org/details/thanksgivingserm00lcpalm Accessed 1.29.26.

[1271] Thirty thousand copies were circulated in New Orleans, perhaps 50- to 60,000 throughout the South. The sermon was also printed in a volume edited by his old Amherst classmate, Henry Ward Beecher, *Fast Day Sermons or The Pulpit on the State of the Country* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1861): 57-80; cf. Haskell Monroe, "Bishop Palmer's Thanksgiving Day Address," *Louisiana History* 4 (1963): 105-118. (Monroe's use of the title "*bishop*" may derive from an early 19th century argument carried on among some Presbyterians with Episcopalians, whereby Presbyterians pointed out that in the New Testament, the terms *presbuteroi* and *episcopoi* (elder and bishop) were interchangeable, not indicating a differentiation in status or rank. Thus, some Presbyterian ministers believed themselves properly styled as Bishop, as in their polity all ministers were both presbyters and bishops.)

[1272] See Margaret Burr DesChamps, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Orator-Preacher of the Confederacy," *Southern Speech Journal* 19:1 (1953): 14-22; Haskell Monroe, "Southern Presbyterians and the Secession Crisis," *Civil War History* 6 (December 1960): 351-60; Wayne C. Eubank, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer's Thanksgiving Sermon, 1860," in Jeffery Auer, editor, *Antislavery and Disunion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963): 191-98.

[1273] It must remembered that slavery had defenders in the North, particularly among Old School Presbyterians who believed that abolitionists went "too far." For example, as late December 1860, the Rev. Henry J. van Dyke defended slavery as a divine institution and assailed "the atheistic spirit" of abolitionism. "The Character and Influence of Abolitionism. A Sermon Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, on Sabbath Evening, Dec. 9th, 1860" (New York: George F. Nesbitt, 1860).

[are] By nature the most affectionate and loyal of all races beneath the sun, they are also the most helpless; and no calamity can befall them greater than the loss of that protection they enjoy under this patriarchal system. Indeed, the experiment has been grandly tried of precipitating them upon freedom which they know not how to enjoy; and the dismal results are before us in statistics that astonish the world. With the fairest portions of the earth in their possession and with the advantage of a long discipline as cultivators of the soil, their constitutional indolence has converted the most beautiful islands of the sea [e.g., Hispaniola, where the great slave revolt (1791-1804) in Haiti that had overthrown French rule had occasioned great fear among American slave owners] into a howling waste.

The relation of master to slave was paternalistic:

My servant, whether born in my house or bought with my money, stands to me in the relation of a child. Though providentially owing me service, which, providentially, I am bound to exact, he is, nevertheless, my brother and my friend, and I am to him a guardian and a father. He leans upon me for protection, for counsel, and for blessing; and so long as the relation continues, no power but the power of Almighty God shall come between him and me. Were there no argument but this, it binds upon us the providential duty of preserving the relation that we may save him from a doom worse than death.

The South's performance of her divinely given duty had only resulted in foolish scorn from those who traded with it.[1274] Still,

It is a duty which we owe, further, to the civilized world. It is a remarkable fact that during these 30 years of unceasing warfare against slavery, and while a lying spirit has inflamed the world against us, that world has grown more and more dependent upon it for sustenance and wealth. Every tyro knows that all branches of industry fall back upon the soil. We must come, every one of us, to the bosom of this great mother for nourishment. In the happy partnership which has grown up in providence between the tribes of this confederacy, our industry has been concentrated upon agriculture. . . . Strike now a blow at this system of labor and the world itself totters at the stroke. Shall we permit that blow to fall? Do we not owe it to civilized man to stand in the breach and stay the uplifted arm? If the blind Samson lays hold of the pillars which support the arch of the world's industry, how many more will be buried beneath its ruins than the lords of the Philistines? 'Who knoweth whether we are not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' [Esther 4:4].

To the South, "the highest position is assigned," he cried, "of defending, before all nations, the cause of all religion and all truth." Abolitionists were "atheistic," because the principles of slavery were set forth in scripture, and therefore, to deny the legitimacy of slaveholding was to oppose God himself. Moving to a climax, he declared, "This spirit of atheism . . . has selected us for its victims, and slavery for its issue."

Returning to the idea of a sacred trust, he concluded, "In this trust, we are resisting the power which wars against constitutions and laws and compacts, against Sabbaths and sanctuaries, against the family, the State, and the Church; which blasphemously invades the prerogatives of God, and rebukes the Most High for the errors of his administration; which, if it cannot snatch the reign of empire from his grasp, will lay the universe in ruins at his feet."

Displaying his mastery of oratorical method, the preacher challenged his hearers toward conversion, ready for war to preserve the peace. He asked, "Is it possible that we shall decline the onset?"

[1274] Partisans for the Confederacy, as well as apologists, and often historians, have often used the word South as a synonym for the Confederate States. But research has shown a great many of the people who lived in the South were indifferent to or opposed to the Confederacy both at the time of secession and throughout the Civil War.

The question with the South to-day is not what issue shall *she* make, but how shall she meet that which is prepared for her? Is it possible that we can hesitate longer than a moment? In our natural recoil from the perils of revolution, and with our clinging fondness for the memories of the past, we may perhaps look around for something to soften the asperity of this issue, and for some ground on which we may defer the day of evil, for some hope that the gathering clouds may not burst in fury upon the land. It is alleged, for example, that the President-elect has been chosen by a fair majority under prescribed forms. But need I say, to those who have read history that no despotism is more absolute than that of an unprincipled democracy, and no tyranny more galling than that exercised through constitutional formulas? But the plea is idle, when the very question we debate is the perpetuation of that Constitution now converted into an engine of oppression, and the continuance of that union which is henceforth to be our condition of vassalage. I say it with solemnity and pain, this union of our forefathers is already gone. It existed but in mutual confidence, the bonds of which were ruptured in the late election. Though its form should be preserved, it is, in fact, destroyed. . . .

For myself I say that, under the rule which threatens us, I throw off the yoke of this union as readily as did our ancestors the yoke of King George III. . . . What faith can be placed in the protestations of men who openly avow that their consciences are too sublimated to be restrained by the obligation of covenants or by the sanctity of oaths? No: we have seen the trail of the serpent five and twenty years in our Eden; twined now in the branches of the forbidden tree, we feel the pangs of death already begun as its hot breath is upon our cheeks, hissing out the original falsehood, 'Ye shall not surely die' (Genesis 3:4). . . . Let us not desire to shift the day of trial by miserable subterfuges of this sort. The issue is upon us; let us meet it like men and end this strife forever.

It is nowhere denied that the first article in the creed of the now dominant party is the restriction of slavery within its present limits. It is distinctly avowed by their organs and in the name of their elected chieftan. . . .There can be no doubt whatever in the mind of any man, that Mr. Lincoln regards slavery as a moral, social, and political evil, and that it should be dealt with as such by the Federal Government, in every instance where it is called upon to deal with it at all. On this point there is no room for question—and there need be no misgivings as to his official action. The whole influence of the Executive Department of the Government, while in his hands, will be thrown against the extension of slavery into the new territories of the Union, and the reopening of the African slave trade. On these points he will make no compromise nor yield one hair's breadth to coercion from any quarter or in any shape. He does not accede to the alleged decision of the Supreme Court, that the Constitution places slaves upon the footing of other property, and protects them as such wherever its jurisdiction extends, nor will he be, in the least degree, governed or controlled by it in his executive action. . . .'

What say you to this, to whom this great providential trust of conserving slavery is assigned? 'Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law' (Psalm 94:20). It is this that makes the crisis. Whether we will or not, this is the historic moment when the fate of this institution hangs suspended in the balance. Decide either way, it is the moment of our destiny—the only thing affected by the decision is the complexion of that destiny. If the South bows before this throne, she accepts the decree of restriction and ultimate extinction, which is made the condition of her homage.

Palmer then moved to an express call for secession and war:

As it appears to me, the course to be pursued in this emergency is that which has already been inaugurated. Let the people in all the Southern States, in solemn council assembled, reclaim the powers they have delegated. . . . Let them further, take all the necessary steps looking to separate and independent existence; and initiate measures for framing a new and homogeneous confederacy. Thus, prepared for every contingency, let the crisis come.

Restating his thesis, Palmer moved to the peroration of his address, driving home his assertions that slavery—and slavery alone—was the foundation of liberty. Therefore, slavery's preservation was the only hope for God's people. He hoped for an amicable parting, recalling a familiar biblical story:

> What remains but that we say to each other, calmly and kindly, what Abraham said to Lot: 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren: Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me . . . if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left' (Genesis 13:8-9). Thus, if we cannot save the Union, we may save the inestimable blessings it enshrines; if we cannot preserve the vase, we will preserve the precious liquor it contains . . . upon our united and determined resistance at this moment depends the salvation of the whole country—in saving ourselves we shall save the North from the ruin she is madly drawing down upon her own head. . . .The position of the South is at this moment sublime. If she has grace given her to know her hour, she will save herself, the country, and the world. . . . If there be any way to save, or reconstruct the union of the forefathers, it is this."

Solemnly, Palmer closed his appeal, committing himself to the cause he had so fervently espoused. Quietly, as if swearing an oath, he vowed that

> It only remains to say, that whatever be the fortunes of the South, I accept them for my own. Born upon her soil, of a father thus born before me—from an ancestry that occupied it while yet it was a part of England's possessions—she is in every sense my mother. I shall die upon her bosom—she shall know no peril, but it is my peril—no conflict but it is my conflict—and no abyss of ruin, into which I shall not share her fall. May the Lord God cover her head in this her day of battle![1275]

Palmer's Defense of Slavery

Palmer's advocacy of secession and defense of slavery were closely linked. Historian of slavery Stephen R. Haynes has gathered evidence that certain Presbyterians in the Synod of Mississippi, such as James Smylie,[1276] James A. Sloan, and Palmer invoked an interpretation of Noah's curse upon his grandson Ham, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, to justify the enslaving of Black persons—an idea that Palmer spelled out in an 1858 address, "Our Historic Mission," at the new LaGrange, Tennessee, Presbyterian College,[1277] where he had been invited by Professor John N. Waddel (1812-1895), former chancellor of the University of Mississippi.[1278] Palmer spoke of "three divisions" into which humanity was separated after the Flood, identifying a distinct mission for each throughout history.

[1275] Mitchell Snay has remarked that Palmer's "Thanksgiving Sermon" is "perhaps the best text" for understanding the secessionist argument in its original form, illustrating "as well as any other text the religious understanding" of the sectional conflict. *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South*, 175.

[1276] Smylie, who belonged to the generation before Palmer's, became famous in his day for a widely-distributed "pamphlet," *A Review of a Letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe, to the Presbytery of Mississippi on the Subject of Slavery* (1836), that explained that in the original Greek, the word *douloi*, rendered "servants" in the King James Version of the New Testament letters, as in "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters . . . as unto Christ," (Ephesians 6:5, etc.) was properly translated:—slaves.

[1277] See Stephen R. Haynes, "Race, National Destiny and the Sons of Noah in the Thought of Benjamin M. Palmer," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78:2 (2000): 125-43.

[1278] Stephen R. Haynes, "Noah's Sons in New Orleans: Genesis 9-11 and Benjamin Morgan Palmer," in *Noah's Curse: The Justification of American Slavery*, 125-145; cf. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Haynes's work provides the fullest examination of Palmer's views on race.

According to Palmer, "The descendants of Ham (see Genesis 9:18-27) in whom the sensual and corporeal appetites predominate, are driven like an infected race beyond the deserts of Sahara, where under a glowing sky nature harmonizes with their brutal and savage disposition."[1279] This address and many of Palmer's later sermons and speeches were published. Taken together, they form a substantial body, much of it having to do with the problems of history, nations, and race—problems in which Palmer's views, while satisfying to many (though not all) who heard him in his day, place him in decidedly uncomfortable company today.[1280] Haynes notes that Palmer acknowledged his debt to the German philosopher Friedrich von Schlegel and his idea that "historic" peoples are the real actors in the drama of history.[1281] Here, Palmer concluded,

> Let us say, with all of the distinctness and emphasis with which words of destiny are ever uttered, that we will conserve this institution of domestic servitude, not only from the pressure of necessity and from the instinct of interest—not only from a feeling of trusteeship over the race thus providentially committed to us—not even at last from a general conviction of the righteousness of our course—but also from a special sense of duty to mankind.

He would return to this theme again and again.

A Vindication of Secession and the South"

In April 1861, Palmer published in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* a widely quoted "Vindication of Secession and the South," written as an answer to Presbyterian leader Robert J. Breckinridge of Kentucky's call for loyalty to the Union. Here again he sounded his ideas about the permanence of slavery. For a third time, he spoke of the South's duty "to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery." He urged this duty on the basis of another Southern theme, namely, Southern honor. "In the great impending crisis," he said, "the South would be recreant to every obligation of duty *and to every principle of honor* [italics mine], and to every instinct of interest if she did not effectively contradict and rebuke the insufferable arrogance of those who assume into their hands the prerogatives of Divine legislation." [1282]

In a Confederate Fast Day sermon on June 1, 1861, Palmer went on to say that "Upon Ham was pronounced the doom of perpetual servitude. . . . Accordingly, history records not a single example of any member of this group lifting itself, by any process of self-development, above the savage condition. From first to last, their mental and moral characteristics, together with the guidance of Providence, have marked them for servitude." Palmer had cited texts from Genesis chapters 9-11 as biblical justification for slavery and therefore Southern secession to preserve it as a divinely-ordained institution. As with most Presbyterian defenders of slavery, he painted a picture of benevolent masters served by childlike and obedient Africans.[1283]

Palmer's arguments for slavery, while not unprecedented, were not universally held, or at least had not been uniformly held by Presbyterians. In the early part of the 19th century, prominent Southern Presbyterians such as John Holt Rice and Robert Lewis Dabney (both Virginians) had expressed doubts about slavery. But by the 1850s, circumstances economic and social had altered views so completely that there was scant opposition to it.

[1279] Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 12-13, 73-74.

[1280] Benjamin M. Palmer, *Our Historic Mission, An Address Delivered Before the Eunomian and Phi-Mu Societies of La-Grange Synodical College, July 7, 1858* (New Orleans: *True Witness* Office, 1859).

[1281] Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 129.

[1282] Benjamin M. Palmer, "A Vindication of Secession and the South," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 14 (April 1861): 134-177. The article was first published as "Our Country: its Peril, and its Deliverance," in the *Danville* [Ky.] *Quarterly Review* (March 1861).

[1283] Benjamin M. Palmer, "National Responsibility Before God," a sermon preached in the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, June 13,1861, cited in David B. Chesebrough, editor, *"God Ordained This War:" Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991): 204.

Presbyterians, said to have given the pro-slavery cause "its intellectual leadership," rose to defend the ownership of human beings and confiscation of their labor as a divinely ordained institution that the Church should sanction; they also claimed that slavery was a purely civil relation with which the Church as "a spiritual body" had no right to interfere.

Sending the Soldiers to War

Young men—many of them mere boys—lined up to fight in a war most believed would be glorious, painless, and brief. Ministers did their part to bolster their courage. In May 1861, in the presence of the Crescent Rifles, with their battle flags lining the walls of his church, Palmer had chosen as his text Psalm 144:1: "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." He asserted that enemies of the South were convicted before God—the South was fighting in self-defense, on behalf of the great American principle of self-government, and the North had sinned against God, so that the conflict was "an issue between religion and atheism." The following day, speaking to a huge crowd from the steps of the city hall, he told a company about to leave for the front in Virginia that there had been no holier war in all of history. "It is," he cried, "a war of civilization against a ruthless barbarism . . . a war of religion against a blind and bloody fanaticism." Asking God to bless their flag, he sent them off with prayer, that "the Lord of hosts [will] be around about you as a wall of fire, and shield your head in the day of battle!"[1284]

Palmer Moderates Constituting Confederate Presbyterian Assembly

Divisions were growing in both church and nation, and just as he had called for civil secession, Palmer also played a key role in the rift that came in the Old School Presbyterian Church. Following the action of the May 1861 General Assembly to adopt resolutions by the Rev. Gardiner A. Spring (1785-1873) of New York City calling all church members to support the Federal Union, many Southern Presbyterians alleged that they were placed in an untenable position, what with the formation of a new government over the Confederate States of America. These Presbyterians said that the Church had made allegiance to the United States, a condition of church membership. (Ironically, when Palmer had been nominated for a professorship in ecclesiastical history and church polity at Princeton two years earlier, his name was put forward by none other than Gardiner Spring.)[1285] Certain Presbyterians in the North, notably Princeton's Charles Hodge, concurred with the critique of the Spring Resolutions.[1286]

The Old School Synod of Mississippi, with Palmer as moderator, sought to deal preemptively with these matters. At its meeting on October 25, 1861, the synod adopted resolutions relative to the action of its presbyteries, "in reference to their separation from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, whereby they had, severally, on the ground of the inexpediency and impossibility of maintaining, under existing circumstances, their previous relations with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, dissolved those relations . . ." and had declared themselves "ready to unite with other Presbyteries in the Confederate States taking similar action, in constituting a General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States."

[1284] Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906): 205-19, 237-39.

[1285] Until April 1861, moderate ministers from different sides of the Mason-Dixon line often filled pastorates and professorships across the sectional lines—theology being more important for church positions than politics. After the firing at Fort Sumter, a number of ministers North and South felt they had no choice but to resign their positions and go to their country of allegiance.

[1286] *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:552; Clarke, 211.

Did Presbyterian Ministers Foment the National Divide?

Walter Brownlow Posey has observed that "Southern clergymen, particularly Presbyterians, became by their training and by their influence, the leaders with the ability to speak and to write on controversial matters that arose before and during the Civil War."[1287] As the question of secession rose to fever heat, Presbyterians looked to their ministers for guidance, so that as Randy J. Sparks has remarked, "Southern clergymen were . . . willing to sacrifice national religious organizations on the altar of slavery when it became clear that their defense of the institution would deprive them of leadership positions within those organizations." Other scholars have identified Protestant clergy, particularly leaders of Presbyterianism, as dividers of the nation in the generation leading to the Civil War.[1288] C. C. Goen has asserted that the churches were protagonists, not reactors, in the issue, arguing that "The churches were critical agents in a reciprocal process of culminating alienation. In the onrushing tragedy it became evident that the Christian religion, a powerful cultural force in both sections, had been turned to the purposes of regional identity and defense, that equally earnest expositors could draw from the same scriptures diametrically opposite conclusions about the most distinctive feature of the southern way of life, and that the common faith that had once undergirded national unity had itself become an instrument of division."[1289]

For a lack of leaders who could rise above local pressures, America was plunged into the darkest period of its national existence, a time when many saw a failure of leadership on the part of its ministers. Since the Presbyterian Church was the intellectual leader of the churches, it must bear its responsibility. Percy L. Rainwater of the University of Mississippi has reminded readers that Mississippi was a leader in the secession movement "and that the Synod of Mississippi contributed one of the most vigorous secessionists in the Southern clergy, Benjamin M. Palmer of New Orleans." The Synod of Memphis (of which the North Mississippi and Chickasaw Presbyteries were part) also contributed leadership to the secessionists in the Southern clergy, Benjamin M. Palmer of New Orleans." The Synod of Memphis (of which the North Mississippi and Chickasaw Presbyteries were part) also contributed leadership to the secession cause through John N. Waddel of the University of Mississippi and the Presbyterian College at LaGrange.[1290]

In consideration of the "harmonious action of the Presbyteries," the synod issued the following deliverance:

> 1st. That the withdrawal of the Presbyteries from their connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, does, in no way, disturb the existence of the Synod of Mississippi—that body continuing organically what it was originally made by the act which created it; 2nd. That the position taken by the constituents composing the Synod, being harmonious, necessitates an action on the part of Synod, which shall place it in a position corresponding with that taken by the Presbyteries; 3rd. That this Synod, therefore, ought to, and hereby does declare, that all connection heretofore [subsisting] between it and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, is dissolved; and 4th. That a similar connection shall be formed with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church

[1287] Walter Brownlow Posey, "Review of *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, Confederate Centennial Studies, Number Three, by James W. Silver" (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Co., 1957)," *Journal of Mississippi History* 19 (July 1957): 208.

[1288] Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 124.

[1289] C. C. Goen, "Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Regional Religion and North-South Alienation in Antebellum America," *Church History* 52 (March 1983): 21-35; C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War* (Macon Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1985): 141-90; cf. William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 2007); Samuel S. Hill Jr., *The South and the North in American Religion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

[1290] Percy Lee Rainwater, *Mississippi: Storm Center of Secession 1856-1865* (Baton Rouge: O. Clayton 1938).

in the Confederate States, so soon as organized; and in token thereof, our records shall be sent up for inspection and review by that body.[1291]

On December 4, 1861, John N. Waddel brought down the gavel for the constituting Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. The meeting was in the First Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia, and Waddel was elected the body's first clerk. Palmer was chosen moderator and preached the opening sermon.[1292] An eloquent defense of slavery along with an apology for the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church, written by Thornwell and titled, "An Address by the General Assembly to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth," was then adopted.

The address insisted that slavery was a positive good. It "is a real and effective discipline, and without it, we are profoundly persuaded that the African race in the midst of us can never be elevated in the scale of being." It asserted that "If men had drawn their conclusions only from the Bible, it would no more have entered into any human head to denounce slavery as a sin, than to denounce monarchy, aristocracy or poverty." The new Church "held no distinct position on slavery: We are neither friends nor the foes of slavery . . . we have no commission either to propagate it or abolish it. . . .We have no right, as a Church, to enjoin it as a duty, or to condemn it as a sin." But in keeping with the famous "Cornerstone Speech," delivered by Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens on the previous March 21st in which Stephens, recasting the words of Christ in Matthew 21:42, had said of slavery, "This stone which was rejected by the first builders 'is become the chief of the corner,' the real 'cornerstone' in our new edifice." The Confederate Presbyterian address affirmed that the Black race stood lower than the white on the scale of being. This being so, as long as the Black race co-existed side by side with the white, "bondage is its normal condition." With an eye to the Spring Resolutions, it declared that "the provinces of Church and State are perfectly distinct" and that the one has "no right to usurp the jurisdiction of the other." It warned that "unless each is confined to its own track, the consequences may be . . . disastrous." This statement affirming the Church's spirituality having been set forth as its defining doctrine and laid down as a justification for separation from the parent body, the newly organized Assembly then spent half an hour in prayer "for the blessing of God upon the cause of the Confederate States."[1293]

Duties Toward the Slaves

Many Southern Presbyterians, while believing that slavery was a divine institution, also believed that Christian people owed a duty to enslaved people, to preach to them, to teach them from the Bible, and to speak against abusive treatment by cruel masters. Palmer was certainly one such person. As the war progressed, some Southern Presbyterians pressed a long-standing hope to ameliorate the condition of slaves. One such person was the Rev. James A. Lyon (1814-1882), pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Mississippi (well-known as a contrarian in denominational affairs, yet highly respected). As members of the same synod, he and Palmer were acquainted both through participation in church governing bodies and knowledge of each other's writings. Lyon's views about slavery had evolved. In 1859, he had stood against a sale of foreign Blacks who had been smuggled into the city for a public auction. Lyon and another local minister condemned the disposal of "stolen property" within "the sound of the church bells of Columbus." A native of East Tennessee who had grown up far from the South's plantation country, Lyon was a commissioner for his Tombeckbee (Tombigbee) Presbytery in Mississippi

[1291] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (October 25, 1861).

[1292] Initially, the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America was composed of presbyteries and congregations from the 11 seceding states, but following the Civil War, there was a realignment of some churches, synods, and presbyteries in Border State areas: Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, as well as a single congregation in Pennsylvania!

[1293] See W. A. Alexander, *A Digest of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. . . .* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1888): Section 611; and Robert Ellis Thompson, *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States*, Appendix XIX, 388-406.

to the 1861 Confederate Presbyterian Assembly. He urged the Assembly to take up the matter of church duties toward the slaves. Palmer was willing to consider the proposal, but on his own terms.[1294]

The Rev. Charles Colcock Jones of Georgia, a leading advocate of evangelistic work among the slaves, gave a stirring address calling for work among the slaves. Lyon commended Jones for stressing the need for religious instruction, but also urged preaching to masters regarding their obligations to the slaves. Emphasizing the importance of the family, he deplored the fact that, except in one or two states, "this divine institution" was not recognized among slaves, as evidenced by the fact that slaves were not afforded the protections in law afforded to married couples and their children. Lyon also called for stronger laws to protect slaves from cruel overseers. He proposed that a committee prepare a pastoral letter, "on the subject of slavery and the religious instruction of colored people," to be submitted to the next Assembly. When objection was made that this "might bring criticism on the South," Lyon retorted, "We care not one fig what people think, but speak the truth."[1295] He was placed in charge of the committee. "A great opportunity lay before the South," wrote Lyon in his account of the 1861 Assembly. Old relations of church and state now severed, "There is nothing to hinder us from elevating negro [*sic*] slavery up to the Bible standard, which, when done, we can defend against the argument, the sophistry, and the railing of the whole world!"[1296] Lyon devoted much of his time in the year following the 1861 Assembly to preparation of the pastoral letter. He was not ready to report to the small Assembly that met in Montgomery in May 1862 and asked that his committee be continued until the Assembly's 1863 meeting.

In April 1862, Palmer left New Orleans to preside over the opening of the second General Assembly of the Confederate Church, scheduled to meet in Memphis, but upon learning that the city was in danger and that the meeting would be moved to Montgomery, he was persuaded by Mississippi Governor John J. Pettus to canvass the state and encourage those disaffected with the Confederate government in Richmond. The editor of *The Mississippian*, published at Jackson, stated that Palmer's services excited the gratitude of the whole Confederacy, and a Mississippi general said he was worth more to the Confederate cause "than a soldiery of 10,000 men."[1297] In May 1862, when New Orleans fell to Union forces, Palmer sent his wife and children to her father's plantation in South Carolina. He carried on a peripatetic ministry, preaching to soldiers. He said before the Georgia legislature that "touching this controversy . . . we are blameless. The North cannot succeed against the South except through the perpetuation of a double crime without a parallel in the annals of the race—the extermination of both the white and the black races upon our soil." He exclaimed, "Our cause is preeminently the cause of God Himself." Southerners were to defend "God's government of the universe," slavery being part of the divine plan for ordering fallen humanity. Invoking Genesis 9-11, he spoke of Noah's sons: Shem, the conservator of religious truth, Japheth, the organ of human civilization, and Ham, "the drudge upon whom rested the doom of perpetual servitude." He put forth the frustration of the languages at Babel as Jehovah's means of stopping conspirators to usurp divine government—portraying the South as allied with God's cause, defending the separation of nations and people.[1298]

[1294] R. Milton Winter, "James A. Lyon: Southern Presbyterian Apostle of Progress," in *Journal of Presbyterian History* 60 (Winter 1982): 314-35.

[1295] [1283] Lyon, "Journal," 24; *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:24–26; see Hubert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

[1296] Lyon, "Journal," 25; James A. Lyon, "The General Assembly at Augusta," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15 (January 1862): 656.

[1297] See DesChamps, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Orator-Preacher of the Confederacy," 18–20.

[1298] Benjamin M. Palmer, "The Rainbow Round the Throne; or Judgment Tempered with Mercy. A Discourse Before the Legislature of Georgia, Delivered on the Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, Appointed by the President of the Confederate States of America, March 27th, 1863" (Milledgeville, Ga.: Boughton, Nisbet & Barnes, State Printers, 1863), 39; also found in Benjamin M. Palmer and George Foster Pierce. Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B. M. Palmer, D.D. Delivered Before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Ga., on Fast Day, March 27, 1863 (Milledgeville: Boughton, Nisbet & Barnes, 1863); Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 210–11, 220, 267; cf. Thompson, *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States*, 156; William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935): 214–16, 240; W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Random House, 1969): 83.

After a time, Palmer went to Columbia, preaching in his old pulpit at the First Presbyterian Church. Thornwell had died on August 1, 1862, and Palmer also took up his position at Columbia Theological Seminary, teaching what few students there were until such time as the seminary was turned into a hospital for soldiers. In 1863, he wrote a widely-circulated pamphlet urging Confederates in federally controlled areas—especially Louisiana—not to take the oath of allegiance to the U. S. government. Such acts, he said, would be an affront to Southern honor.[1299]

Lyon's committee presented its pastoral letter on slavery to the 1863 Confederate Assembly at Columbia, where he was also elected moderator. Consideration of the pastoral letter formed a major part of its deliberations. But it was sent back to committee. Given this opposition, Lyon was unwilling to continue as committee chair, and the matter was put in the hands of a new committee, headed by the Rev. Robert L. Dabney, professor of theology in Virginia's Union Theological Seminary.[1300] Dabney held very different views on this subject. Willingness to discuss reform had vanished after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863. Sensing the intensity of Confederate anger and moral defensiveness, Palmer opposed Church censures upon the legislation of states, claiming that these made the Church's position liable to misunderstanding. In a December 1863 address before the South Carolina legislature, he declared that the war being fought was for the welfare of the Negro: "I judge his true normal position to be that of 'a servant of servants.'" He said, "The negro race . . . has never in any period of history been able to lift itself above its native condition of fetishism and barbarism . . . except as it has indirectly contributed by servile labor to human progress . . . that the highest type of character, ever developed among them, has been in the condition of servitude [and] that [even] after the advantage of a long discipline to systematic toil, emancipation has converted them instantly from productive laborers into the most indolent and squalid wretches to be found upon the globe." He said enslavement of Africans had brought order to the earth, and was necessary to protect the free Anglo-Saxon, the African slave, and the earth itself from the results of Hamite disorder and ineptitude, and that the form of slavery "most beneficial to the negro himself is precisely that which obtains with us." (Such statements by Palmer and other apologists for slavery resulted in an observation by Mark Noll, that "On slavery, exegetes stood for a commonsense reading of the Bible, but on race, exegetes forsook the Bible and relied on common sense.")[1301] Palmer asserted that "The preeminent grandeur of this war is found in the fact that it centers upon a religious idea. One the one hand . . . is a wicked infidelity, lifting its rebellious arm against the ruler of the universe; and on the other, humble loyalty, receiving the blow, and offering itself in a sacrifice to His insulted Majesty." Palmer was certain that the Confederacy would triumph ultimately, "since the battle is not ours, but His." He could not reconcile himself to forgiveness, speaking of "an impassible gulf yawning between North and South." He said that "Over the graves of our dead, it will be impossible to shake hands in amity and love."[1302]

The following year, the 1864 Assembly convened in Charlotte, North Carolina. It adopted a "Narrative on the State of Religion," which declared that

> The long-continued agitations of our adversaries have wrought within us a deeper conviction of the divine appointment of domestic servitude and have led to a clearer comprehension of the duties we owe

[1299] Benjamin M. Palmer, "The Oath of Allegiance to the United States, Discussed in its Moral and Political Bearings" (Richmond: MacFarlane & Fergusson, 1863).

[1300] Needless to say, others than Lyon disagreed with Palmer, some quite stridently. The Rev. R. L. Stanton, of the faculty at Danville, Kentucky's Presbyterian seminary and a member of the Northern Assembly, declared "that he expected to meet such men as Palmer and Thornwell in heaven, but that he hoped they would first be hung on earth." *The True Presbyterian* (August 28, 1862).

[1301] Mark A. Noll, "The Bible and Slavery," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, edited by Randall N. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 63.

[1302] Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "A Discourse before the General Assembly of South Carolina on December 10, 1863, appointed by the Legislature as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer," (Columbia: Charles P. Pelham, State Printer, 1864).

to the African race. We hesitate not to affirm that it is the peculiar mission of the Southern Church to conserve the institution of slavery, and to make it a blessing both to master and slave.[1303]

Notably, the Assembly's declaration did not contain Palmer's words, "as now existing," as spoken in his famous Thanksgiving Day sermon. But now, as the Confederate armies failed, the duty "to conserve the institution" was not framed as "the South's" but as "the peculiar mission of the Southern Church." From Princeton, the bastion of Old School Presbyterianism in the North, the revered theologian and biblical expositor Charles Hodge wrote that "It is enough to humble the whole Christian world to hear our Presbyterian brethren in the South declaring that the great mission of the Southern church was to conserve the system of slavery. Since the death of Christ, no such dogma stains the record of an ecclesiastical body."[1304]

Having adopted this statement of its mission and purpose, the General Assembly of the Confederate Church adjourned for the last time as an ecclesiastical body of that name and country. When the Assembly met again in Macon, Georgia, in December 1865, all occasion to enact the suggestions about which Lyon and Palmer and Dabney had argued had been removed by news of Lee's surrender. Slavery as a Southern institution had been unconditionally ended forever.[1305] They would live to argue on other days, and Palmer, not one to concede defeat easily, maintained a brave front. Mary Boykin Chesnut, wife of prominent South Carolina politician James Chesnut Jr., told her diary about a sermon Palmer preached in November 1864. "What a sermon!" she exclaimed. "The preacher stirred my blood. My very flesh crept and tingled. A red-hot glow of patriotism passed through me. Such a sermon must strengthen the hearts and the hands of many people. There was more exhortation to fight and die á la Joshua, than meek Christianity."[1306]

Palmer Re-Embraces Doctrine of the Church's "Spirituality"

Palmer returned with his family to New Orleans a chastened man. Having spoken to the dismemberment of the country, he had seen the carnage of war—an episode in fratricide that political sermons had done much to engender. A reporter for *The New Orleans Times* reported on July 11, 1865, that he appeared "more . . . subdued than he ever was before. . . . Henceforth no word should escape his lips, but such as was meant for a humble servant in the temple of his God."[1307] The paper heaped opprobrium upon the long-absent preacher, perhaps blaming the city's war troubles on him. In an article just under the notice of his return, the editor charged that "political passions and prejudices did not belong in a house of worship." Palmer's biographer, Thomas Cary Johnson (1859–1936), a professor at Union Seminary in Virginia, himself a strong defender of the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church as well as segregation and racial subordination,[1308] somewhat inaccurately stressed the singularity of Palmer's 1860 sermon, saying that, "The time came when the wisdom of his course in preaching that sermon seemed less apparent; indeed, he is said to have repented preaching the discourse, though the day never came when he took an essentially different view of the great subject discussed."[1309]

[1303] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCCSA, 1864): 293. The 1863 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Old School) had reaffirmed an 1818 resolution that, "We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another . . . utterly inconsistent with the law of God" and "totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ."

[1304] Charles Hodge, "President Lincoln," *Princeton Review* 37 (July 1865): 439.

[1305] *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:61, 62.

[1306] Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905): 333-34.

[1307] *New Orleans Times* (July 17, 1865).

[1308] Johnson, R. L. Dabney, and Palmer formed a kind of triumvirate of "unreconstructed Southerners, holding to Civil War-era views on race and reconciliation long after others moderated their positions.

[1309] Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 223.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer

Many Southern ministers would modestly follow Palmer's example—perhaps to protect their positions. Indeed, it would become the stated policy of his Church—trusting the status quo as the best way forward. This policy of addressing civil matters in oblique ways, if at all, would make it infinitely harder for the Church to minister in years to come, almost as if it voluntarily put on blinders lest it blunder into another tragic misreading of the divine will. Yet, Palmer's thought was not static; he would address politics even while denying that he did so. He would preach well into the era writers such as Henry Grady would speak of as "the New South." But Palmer's "New South," proud and unbowed, would be remarkably like the old, with racial disparity, economic inequality, and social justice only for elites such as the wealthy white church members who sat before him Sunday by Sunday in his beautiful Gothic church. As Timothy F. Reilly has written, "Palmer not only sought to vindicate his people, he managed to secure for himself an eminent position among the venerated sages of a rejuvenated South."[1310]

Back in New Orleans, as federal authorities in 1870 pressured the public school board to admit African American children to white schools, Palmer led white Presbyterians who quickly organized parochial schools for their children.[1311] Palmer's church opened a school for girls. It operated for seven years until the city's schools were resegregated following the end of U. S. administration.[1312] The, in 1874, Palmer urged a resolution in the Southern Presbyterian General Assembly to set off its African American congregations as a separate or subordinate church.[1313] (After the war, Presbyterians, North and South did not reunite. The former Confederate or Southern Church was renamed the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS, or the U. S. Church) with the so-called Northern Church continuing as the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA, or the U.S.A. Church.) These moves toward segregation by the PCUS, preceded, in many cases, the legal segregation enactments by Southern states commonly known as "Jim Crow."

Palmer and Lyon Argue over Relations with Northern Presbyterians

James A. Lyon was one of the earliest friends of Presbyterian rapprochement after the Civil War. Contrary to leaders such as Palmer, Thornwell, and Dabney, Lyon believed that the issues that caused Presbyterians North and South to divide in 1861 were political, not doctrinal. He refused to blame the Gardiner Spring Resolutions as

[1310] Reilly, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Become Nationalist," 294.

[1311] Nick Willborn, ed., *Selected Writings of Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Articles Written for the Southwestern Presbyterian in the Years 1869-70* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 2014).

[1312] Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 310.

[1313] H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But…*, 241-42.

the cause of the Southern Presbyterian schism.[1314] In 1869, the Northern Assembly endorsed an overture toward fraternal relations with its Southern counterpart. Palmer would have nothing of it. He charged that the U.S.A. Church "has involved itself in criminal errors touching the kingly office of Christ; ignoring, persistently, His spiritual kingdom, the Church–betraying her spirituality and independence, and perverting the power of the keys to uphold the State, and introducing terms of ecclesiastical communion, unwarranted by Holy Scripture, and contradictory to the commands of Christ." He wrote 17 articles for *The Southwestern Presbyterian* (a church paper in New Orleans that Palmer controlled) arguing against "fraternal correspondence" between the two bodies and tracing in detail objectionable actions of both Northern Assemblies during the war.[1315]

The following year, the General Assembly of the newly reunited Old and New School Churches, U.S.A. moved again for "cordial and fraternal relations" with the PCUS and authorized a committee to approach the Southern Assembly. It also sought to soften the sting of harsh declarations adopted during the war depicting the South as disloyal, treacherous, and treasonous.[1316] The PCUS Assembly graciously received the visitors and allowed them to speak. Their proposals were referred to a committee chaired by Palmer. The committee charged that during the war, the U.S.A. Assemblies "did fatally complicate themselves with the State in political utterances deliberately pronounced year after year, which in our judgment were a sad betrayal of the cause and kingdom of our common Lord and Head." Palmer's committee[1317] urged that until the U.S.A. Assembly resolved "to place the crown once more upon the head of Jesus Christ as the alone King of Zion," the PCUS could not "by official correspondence even consent to blunt the edge of this our testimony concerning the nature and mission of the Church as a purely spiritual body." It further declared that the 1870 Old-New School Presbyterian reunion in the North had resulted in

> *a total surrender of all the great testimonies of the Church for the fundamental doctrines of grace*." (italics original). Of these failing testimonies, we are now the *sole surviving heir*, which we must lift from the dust, and bear to the generations after us. It would be a serious compromise of this sacred trust to enter into public and official fellowship with those repudiating these testimonies.

Lyon opposed the Palmer Committee's report, urging that "the people want peace, and not war," but the Assembly appointed a second committee, again under Palmer's chairmanship, to prepare a pastoral letter that would explain the Assembly's actions. It stated that, "The overture from the Northern Assembly was based upon the fatal assumption that mutual grievances existed, in reference to which it became necessary to arbitrate. This assumption is precisely what we cannot truthfully concede. Our records may be searched in vain for a single act of aggression, or a single unfriendly declaration against the Northern Church" Palmer maintained that, "Whatever obstructions may be in the way of ecclesiastical fellowship were not created by us, and we could not allow ourselves to be placed in the false position before the world of parties who have been guilty of wrong to the Northern Church." He did concede that, if the Southern Church had, on occasion, departed from a principle of nonsecular and nonpolitical conduct of its affairs, these "dwindle into motes and specks" (Matthew 7:3-5, KJV) by the side of those elaborate and colossal deliverances, repeated each year through formal committees, and exalted into solemn testimonies coordinate with the doctrines of religion and faith, which disfigure the legislation of both the Northern Assemblies [Old and New Schools] through successive years." Palmer's letter called for unequivocal retraction "of the imputations against ourselves, industriously circulated throughout Christendom." This was "compelled by a proper sense of our self-respect and a due regard to the honour of our own Church."

[1314] The "Spring Resolutions" were introduced by the Rev. Gardiner A. Spring of New York City. Adopted by the May 1861 Old School Assembly in Philadelphia, they enjoin ed support for the federal government by all Presbyterians.

[1315] Benjamin M. Palmer, "Reunion Overture of the Northern General Assembly to the Southern Presbyterian Church," *Southwestern Presbyterian*, series of 17 articles beginning August 19, 1869.

[1316] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUSA, 1870): 18.

[1317] The seeming inconsistency of welcoming the Northern visitors and then rejecting their embassy was an example of an attempt to balance competing interests—a practice well-known in Presbyterian deliberative assemblies down to the present day.

To agree to "any form of intercourse, while they remain upon record, would be a tacit acquiescence in the same, and a submission to the dishonour which has been cast upon the name of our people and on our Church."[1318] The PCUS publication committee was authorized to issue a volume recounting events which justified the Southern Church's separate existence.[1319]

As late as 1882, *The Southwestern Presbyterian* protested against fraternal relations with the U.S.A. Church. Though Palmer had invited a minister of that body to serve as guest preacher for his church that summer,[1320] the paper said that any discussion of fraternal relations would open old wounds. "We submit," said the paper, "that until there is some modification of the records [of the Northern Assembly] our attitude must remain as it is."[1321] Palmer was unalterably opposed to organic union with the Northern Church or any steps leading thereto. In 1883, when the two Assemblies entered into fraternal relations, he published an article reaffirming his position.[1322] At the General Assemblies of 1875, 1886, and 1887, Palmer gave stirring speeches opposing relations with the U.S.A. Church.[1323]

"A Great Southern Presbyterian University"

Despite assertions by Thornwell and Dabney that the church's mission was purely "spiritual," so that it had no right to concern itself with secular education (that is, schooling other than that related to preparation of ministers), Lyon, with Southern Presbyterians generally, was supportive of denominational efforts on behalf of general education. Always staunch believers in an educated clergy and a literate laity, Presbyterians had made great contributions to education in the South in the opening decades of the 19th century. By 1861, nearly every Southern synod had at least one institution of higher learning, and Presbyterians were teaching in state colleges as well.

On this point, Palmer and James A. Lyon agreed. At the commencement of the ten-year-old University of Mississippi, Palmer (noted as "a figure much-interested in the educational cause") was invited to give the principal address. He wrote the trustees that "A brilliant future is before the University & I shall watch her progress with deep interest & fervent prayers for her prosperity and success."[1324]

Reflecting the heady optimism of the of the Confederate Church's first Assembly, Lyon urged the body to embrace higher education. Tradition held that this matter belonged to the synods and presbyteries, but Lyon argued that they were too weak to sustain colleges. He believed (correctly) that the Presbyterian Church "was not keeping pace with the progress of science and was not maintaining her high position. In the Book of Lamentations (4:1) in the KJV, 'how is the gold become dim?' describes Jerusalem's former glory—its precious people, priests, and temple—becoming tarnished and ruined due to sin and divine judgment, with noble figures now like broken pots and sacred stones scattered in the streets, showing a drastic fall from divine favor and splendor. . . as the chief educator of the land." Consequently, Lyon and a half dozen commissioners from the Southwest (that is, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas), where schools of quality were weak or did not exist, held "a little, timid meeting"

[1318] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1870): 538-40. *Pastoral Letter of 1870: A Historical and Official Document Setting Forth Three "Great Principles" that Our Church Has Declared in the Most Solemn and Emphatic Manner" to be "Among the Fundamental Principles of our Organization."*

[1319] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1870): 516–17; 529–30; *Central Presbyterian* (June 8, 1870): 2; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1870): 530-31; 537-42; *The Distinctive Principles of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1870): 135 pp.

[1320] PCUS ministers recognized the orthodoxy of USA ministers as individuals, and sessions routinely exchanged certificates of dismission (letters of transfer) for church members. The quarrels discussed here were carried on strictly at a General Assembly level.

[1321] *Southwestern Presbyterian* (May 11, 1882).

[1322] "Fraternal Relations," *Southern Presbyterian Review* (April 1883): 306-30.

[1323] See Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 458-75.

[1324] Letter incorporated in Board Minutes (July 14, 1858), cited in Cabaniss, *Life and Thought of a Country Preacher*, 43.

in the study of Dr. Joseph R. Wilson (father of future president Woodrow Wilson), pastor of the host church.[1325] Out of this came a larger educational meeting held in lieu of a formal Assembly session. Lyon led off with a plea for the Southern Church to reassume its role as standard-bearer in the work of education, presenting his dream of one "great Confederate University," a "Princeton of the South."[1326] Most in the Assembly endorsed the idea, and Palmer moved that a committee be appointed to draft plans for "an institution of the highest order" and report to the 1862 Assembly. A report was scheduled for a pre-Assembly convention of "friends of education," and Lyon was to chair the committee. Thus, an idea was born, out of which eventually came one of the South's important educational institutions, but not the "one great . . . University" (uniting all the Church's educational efforts) for which Lyon and Palmer hoped.[1327]

Lyon's proposal for a great Confederate Presbyterian university was made at a time before the region felt the pressure of war. Initially, the Confederate Church was prosperous and enthusiastic, ready to undertake great things. But war soon extracted its toll from Presbyterian colleges and universities in the South. Endowments were lost, students dispersed, and campuses neglected or destroyed. Only Hampden-Sydney and Davidson retained any prosperity.[1328] The war diverted the Church's energy, and plans for higher education were deferred. Lyon's committee never reported.[1329]

Lyon did not let go of the idea for a great Southern Presbyterian University, seizing every opportunity to realize the goal. At the cessation of hostilities, the seminary at Columbia was on the brink of collapse, its directors having invested the endowment in Confederate bonds.[1330] In 1866, Lyon wrote an article suggesting that the seminary be moved to the Southwest. He lobbied the General Assembly for this proposal. Resistance from the faculty killed the idea, but the following year, Lyon's Tombeckbee Presbytery overtured the Assembly to establish a "southwestern theological seminary." Lyon hoped the proposal might awaken interest in moving Columbia Seminary. But the Assembly declared the idea inexpedient.[1331] Later in this same meeting, Lyon again brought forward his vision of a Southern Presbyterian university. The Assembly adopted a paper on education, which, while saying nothing specifically about a centralized university, yet was understood as having this goal in view. The matter was put to the presbyteries for advice.[1332] Tombeckbee Presbytery again memorialized the 1868 Assembly to take initiative at once to establish "a great central institution of learning," but the replies from presbyteries to the previous year's query caused the whole matter to be postponed indefinitely.[1333]

Agitation for the Southern Presbyterian University continued. In 1869, Lyon again warned in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* that the Church was "falling behind the rapid progress of knowledge." He said that the reason why Presbyterian colleges were being outstripped "was that synods embracing only a few score churches were too small to maintain first class colleges." Inadequate income from endowments kept salaries of presidents and professors too low to attract the best talent of the region and made tuition too high for many "to send their sons

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[1325] The First Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia.

[1326] Lyon's effort mirrored campaigns under way in other Southern Protestant denominations. In 1857, representatives from ten Episcopal dioceses across the South met atop Monteagle Mountain in Tennessee for the founding of the University of the South, more popularly known after its refounding in 1866 as "Sewanee." Similar efforts among Methodists resulted in the institutions now known as Emory University in Georgia, Duke in North Carolina, and Vanderbilt in Tennessee. Baptists also embarked upon an effort to found colleges, but in no case did a single centrally located denominational entity emerge. Theological seminaries were eventually operated in conjunction with almost all of these schools.

[1327] Lyon, "The General Assembly at Augusta," 662-63; *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:19-20.

[1328] Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:354.

[1329] [1] "The General Assembly of 1870," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 21 (July 1870): 427-28.

[1330] The directors of Columbia Seminary had placed $250,000 belonging to the seminary in Confederate bonds, all of which was lost. Union Theological Seminary at Hampden-Sydney also invested heavily in Confederate securities.

[1331] James A. Lyon, "The Removal of the Seminary at Columbia, S.C., to the Southwest," *Presbyterian Index* (November 8, 1866); Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1866): 32; Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1867): 140; "The 1867 General Assembly," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 19 (January 1868): 126-28; Lyon, "Journal," 181-83.

[1332] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1867): 150-51.

[1333] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1868): 266.

[*sic*]" to Presbyterian institutions. Lyon therefore proposed that the synods withdraw from the field, turn over their institutions to the General Assembly and that it establish "one truly great university" with schools of law, medicine, and theology. In this way, future generations of Southern Presbyterian "wisdom, piety, and energy" would arise "phoenix-like, out of the ashes of a wasting and desolating war."[1334]

Palmer supported Lyon's proposal. In particular, he said that (with a few exceptions) the Southwest lacked institutions where Presbyterian young men could receive academic training. "As matters now stand," he said, "the large body of them are sent to Virginia . . . while in some sections . . . patronage is beginning to flow to Europe." The South must retain control of the education of her young, "lest their thought be corrupted, and the region converted to alien ideas."

Noting that Providence seemed to have cleared the field, Palmer proposed that each synod decide whether it would concur in the effort to build up a great central institution of learning under control of the Presbyterian Church (South), and whether it would cede whatever institutions and funds it controlled to the benefit of this new enterprise.[1335] In the autumn of 1869, the Synod of Mississippi, of which both Lyon and Palmer were members, overtured the 1870 Assembly to investigate the possibility of establishing such a university. As usual, there was resistance. The idea almost died in committee, but Lyon made an eloquent speech, moving the Assembly to refer the matter to a pre-Assembly convention the following year, which would consider not only the university proposal, but also the whole educational policy of the PCUS.[1336]

At this convention and at the 1871 Assembly itself, the proposal that all synods unite to build a grand university for the South was discussed. There was opposition from the stronger synods in the east, which had relatively prosperous colleges. A pastoral letter was adopted, stressing the importance of education under Presbyterian influence but stating that the Church was not yet prepared to establish a central institution, urging that strong efforts be made to maintain those already operating, and that further multiplication of colleges was not encouraged.[1337]

In light of this recommendation, President J. B. Shearer of Stewart College in Clarksville, Tennessee, offered the assets of his faltering institution to the synods of the Southwest. The tiny school, which had begun as Montgomery Academy in Clarksville in the 1830s, had become a college in 1848 and was renamed Stewart College in 1855 when it came under control of the Old School Synod of Nashville. Unlike many schools, it had survived the Civil War in fairly sound condition.[1338]

In 1873, commissioners from six synods met to accept the assets of Stewart College. They agreed to unite their efforts in building up a great university for the South. Lyon was not present, and the final plan was largely Palmer's work.[1339] After some delay due to financial considerations, Stewart College in 1879 became Southwestern Presbyterian University, with John N. Waddel as first chancellor.[1340] Waddel was summoned after Palmer's church refused his request to resign as pastor to become chancellor in Clarksville.[1341] He did, however, play an important role, serving as a member of Southwestern's board for 20 years.

[1334] James A. Lyon, "The Southern Presbyterian University," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 20 (April 1869): 15-81.

[1335] Benjamin M. Palmer, Letter to the Editor*, Southwestern Presbyterian* (August 12, 1869): 2.

[1336] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1870): 500, 502, 519; "The General Assembly of 1870," 429-30.

[1337] Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1871): 17, 18.

[1338] *Presbyterians in the South*, 1:498.

[1339] Lyon's son, James A. Jr., taught for many years in SWPU's Department of Natural Sciences.

[1340] Waller Raymond Cooper, *Southwestern at Memphis, 1848-1948* (Richmond: John Knox, 1949): 47-67; *Southwestern Presbyterian* (July 10, 1879): 2. In the 1890s, the Synod of Georgia revived the idea of a Presbyterian university to be located in the Deep South. Funds were raised to consolidate Southwestern Presbyterian University with the Theological Seminary at Columbia, locating the merged institution in Atlanta. The scheme collapsed when the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that Southwestern could not be removed from Tennessee, and when the 1905 General Assembly refused to endorse the project. In 1925, Southwestern's charter was amended to organize the institution as a college, and in the same year, the campus was transferred from Clarksville to Memphis. The Clarksville campus, now greatly expanded, is presently home to Austin Peay State University.

[1341] Cooper, *Southwestern at Memphis*, 54-62.

"Ensuring God's Economy of Racial Separation and Anglo-Saxon Domination"

Throughout his long life, the materials Palmer wrote, preached, and published added up to a large body of work. While his thinking on several points—his ideas of race among them—developed in some particulars, he was remarkably consistent in his thinking, given the momentous events that surrounded his life. It is remarkable that the teaching of Genesis surrounding Noah's prophecy concerning his sons formed such a large part of his thinking. For those ordained to the gospel ministry, texts such as Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," among many others, seem to have been "spiritualized" in the thought of white racialist ministers like Palmer, despite the very real situation in the early Christian movement that gave voice to Paul's words.

Palmer has been named as one of the architects of the post-bellum Southern "Lost Cause" ideology.[1342] As Stephen Haynes has observed, "Between the years 1865 to 1890 Palmer devoted tremendous energy and moral capital to ensuring that God's economy of racial separation and Anglo-Saxon domination were reflected in church and society alike."[1343] As he said in an 1882 paper prepared for the Southern Historical Society (a Confederate memorial society, of which he was president that proved to be the chief vehicle for shaping the ideology of the "Lost Cause"), Palmer asserted that, "Principles never die, and if they seem to perish it is only to experience a resurrection in the future."[1344]

In 1870, he was invited to eulogize Robert E. Lee at ceremonies in New Orleans. Reflecting on the revered general's life, he said, "There is a grandeur in misfortune, when that misfortune is borne by a noble heart, with strength of will to endure and endure without complaining or breaking." In so saying, Palmer revealed something of his own struggle. He did not rest easy with the Confederacy's defeat; yet he understood that a certain humility was necessary even as defiance rose from underneath. He saw Lee as a model of endurance for the trials by which "you are to become robust in virtue for eternity."[1345] Again and again, he assured his hearers that future historians would reinterpret events in the South's favor.[1346]

Two years later, Palmer gave a major address, "The Present Crisis and Its Issue," on June 27, 1872, at Washington and Lee University. He was now at the height of his influence—an influence he used not only to shape the country's memories of the past, but also to alert people to dangers in the future. Speaking with the effusiveness that marked Victorian oratory, he said that the invitation from the literary societies "touched me with the solemnity of a call from the grave. I felt as I turned my steps hither, that I was making a pilgrimage to my country's shrine." With Lee's memory infusing the room, he urged his hearers to preserve "gentlemanly instincts which have hitherto characterized our people," for trouble lay ahead. Young men of the type he saw before him would be called to save "our ancestral faith." To fulfill this charge, they would need to draw upon Southern experience, "born of adversity and trial."

He reminded his audience that the greatest problem facing the South was the issue of race and "adjusting the relations between the two distinct peoples that must occupy the same soil." Before the war, the relationship between the two races was "exceedingly simple, because it was domestic." Now, the two races were equal before the law. This sudden transition was a "tremendous experiment." The nation was struggling with the place of freedmen in society. He said, "It is far too delicate and difficult a problem to be solved by empirical legislation—either by

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[1342] Timothy F. Reilly, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Become Nationalist," *Louisiana History* 18 (Summer 1977): 289; Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980): 66, 74, 83, 158; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 50, 51.

[1343] Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 127.

[1344] *Southern Historical Society Papers* 10 (June 1882): 250-54. For the role of Palmer and the Southern Historical Society, see Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 50-51.

[1345] Quoted in Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 351.

[1346] Reilly, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Become Nationalist," 289.

the State, on its political side, or by the Church, on its ecclesiastical side . . . it needs the element of time." There was, he believed, a single underlying principle, "which must control the question: It is indispensable that the purity of race shall be preserved on either side; for it is the condition of life to the one, as much as to the other." He characterized all attempts to mingle the races "from whatever motives, whether of ambitious dominion or of infidel humanism," as failures, "doomed from the beginning." Indeed, "The argument for this I base upon the declared policy of the Divine Administration from the days of Noah till now." In a book, *The Family, in its Civil and Churchly Aspects*, that he published in 1876, Palmer said that, while not wishing to perplex his discussion by bringing forth the "vexed question of slavery," he believed that "in one of its many forms, servitude in one of its many forms is a permanent relation, in all the conditions of human society."[1347] He defended the particular American form that had existed because it followed the divine plan, as "a domestic relation." Slaves were part of the master's extended "family."

Crucially, and unlike some who denied the humanity of African Americans, Palmer defended the unity of the human race, quoting Paul's words before the Athenians from Acts 17:26 that, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth." He maintained that the Bible taught that the human family, originally one, had been divided into certain groups for the purpose of being kept historically distinct. Even if they intermingled and crossed each other, "the record of 4,000 years confirms the fact, that there can be no large or permanent commixture of these great social zones without ruin; and that ruin as complete as can be conceived, since it extends to the entire physical, intellectual and moral nature." So, it was for history and not blood that such separation was necessary.

Palmer therefore taught it imperative that Black and white "shall stand apart in their own social grade, in their own schools, in their own ecclesiastical organizations, under their own teachers and guides; but with all the kindness and helpful cooperation to which the old relations between the races and their natural dependence on each other would naturally predispose." He posited that "Germanic Christians" had been chosen by God to lead the entire human family toward the millennium, just as he would say years later in his famous "Century Sermon" that it was "the more virtuous and vigorous Germanic tribes" that saved Europe in the wake of Rome's decline.[1348] Ernest Trice Thompson, the reforming historian and professor of church polity at Union Seminary in Virginia, remarked in 1973 that "This argument, along with its unsubstantial scriptural basis, would continue to be offered as truth throughout the South for the next 100 years."[1349] As Christopher M. Duncan has observed, "As far as Palmer was concerned, though the firing had ceased, and the nation was now united, a war would continue to rage indefinitely, however, for the principles involved."[1350]

Palmer's hope for ultimate vindication lay uneasy with a sadness in his words. His address evidenced a pessimism about the future. Not only was race a concern, but he also spoke of an "impending crisis," arising from the industrialization of the South, from which he predicted that the traditional Southern sense of honor would disappear,

> to be followed by the swift decay of virtue. The spirit of materialism, infused into all the transactions of business and common life is the Angel of Pestilence dropping the seeds of death from its black wing wherever it sweeps. It is this subtle and dangerous spirit which is at the bottom of that fearful demoralization that has spread like a leprosy over the land.[1351]

[1347] *The Family in Its Civil and Churchly Aspects* (1876): 123-24, cited in *Noah's Curse*, 153.

[1348] Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "The Present Crisis and Its Issues, An Address Delivered Before the Literary Societies of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va., June 27, 1872" (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1872); Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 354-56; "The Address of Rev. B. M. Palmer, D.D., LL.D., delivered on the first day of the New Year and Century in the First Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, La., at the Request of Citizens, and Members of the Church, of which he has been Pastor since December 30, 1856" (New Orleans: no printer given).

[1349] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:199.

[1350] Duncan, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Southern Presbyterian Divine," 127-32.

[1351] Cited in Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 437.

Pessimism of this sort would permeate the sermons, speeches, and writings of virtually all Southern conservatives for years to come.[1352] Needless to say, the source of this pessimism would, in the minds of many, be laid at the feet of the South's many racial and economic disparities. The one great hope, at least among Presbyterians, was education.

Finally, too, Palmer revealed the reason for opposing friendly relations with the U.S.A. Church that was most troubling to him. In 1887, he published an open letter to Southern Presbyterians. After taking account of doctrinal differences, of questions emerging from the Civil War, of the distinctive PCUS view regarding the Spirituality of the Church, as well as other matters, Palmer and four other signers declared that "the race problem" constituted "an insuperable barrier to union with the Northern Church." They maintained that, "Upon no point, are the Southern people more sensitive, to no danger are they more alive, than this of the amalgamation of the two races thrown so closely together and threatening the deterioration of both. This is the peril which confronts us in the proposal to reintegrate in the Northern Church, as being one of the early steps leading surely to that final result."[1353]

Then, in 1890, when the PCUS Committee on Colored Evangelization and the U.S.A. Church's Freedmen's Board agreed to cooperate, Palmer found the idea impossible "on half a dozen grounds, last but not least because it turned over the South, body and soul to the Northern Board, giving them full jurisdiction over us in a matter more intricate than any other to which our people are peculiarly jealous of foreign interference, a matter which involves the most difficult social problems and in which our interests are most vitally concerned." Palmer wrote, "If it is the design of this report to inaugurate a movement looking to the unification of the two churches, they have simply blundered into a movement to arouse the fiercest antagonism that can be considered."[1354]

Jewish-Christian Bonds Formed During Yellow Fever Epidemics

Long after others gave up, Palmer maintained his opposition to dancing. In an 1875 sermon before Orange Presbytery in North Carolina, he thundered, "O tell it out to earth lest it rend again the very rocks and break once more the slumbers of the dead: "A DANCING DISCIPLE OF A CRUCIFIED REDEEMER?" he asked. "Promiscuous dancing between the sexes," cried Palmer, "is essentially voluptuous and demoralizing."[1355]

In 1892, his speech before the Anti-Lottery League at a New Orleans mass meeting in the Grand Opera House on Canal Street was credited with defeat for a constitutional amendment that would have permitted this form of gambling in the state.[1356] The effort to defeat the lottery, as well as efforts to bolster Sabbath observance and to assist Jews suffering in the Russian pogroms, bonded Palmer with Jewish people in New Orleans. He gave the principal address at the funeral in Temple Sinai of Rabbi James K. Gutheim, one of his closest Jewish colleagues,[1357] making this remarkable declaration of Hebrew-Christian solidarity:

> He was the incarnation of virtue and religion, in whom these are embodied as a living personal agency to renew and bless mankind. This is a kind of gospel which men easily understand, for while they may fail to read the black letter of our different schools of philosophy, or even to interpret aright the dogmas of a religious creed; these are instantly comprehended when translated into the daily actions of a pure

[1352] One thinks of the "Vanderbilt Agrarians," a group of 12 Southern writers who offered the region's rural character as the means of preserving the best features of its life.

[1353] *Southern Presbyterian* (August 18, 1887).

[1354] *Central Presbyterian* (January 31, 1894).

[1355] Minutes of Orange Presbytery (1875): 85-98.

[1356] Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 54-63; see Wayne C. Eubank, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer's Lottery Speech, New Orleans, 1891," *Southern Speech Journal*, 24.1 (1958): 2-15.

[1357] Southern Presbyterians did not make their Jewish neighbors the object of evangelistic concern, though Northern Presbyterians did. This was a difference between the two denominations that was not frequently cited in arguments over reunion.

and virtuous life. It is the printing in raised type which sets abstract principles in such relief before the eye that he who runs may read.[1358]

Joining yet another issue, Palmer took up his cudgel against the teaching of evolution in Columbia Seminary. Presbyterians in the Synod of Mississippi (which until 1901 still included Louisiana) took pride in their contribution through Judge John Perkins of Columbus, Mississippi, toward the endowment of a chair to explore the relation of natural science with revealed religion at Columbia Seminary. Yet, when the first occupant of the Perkins professorship, the Rev. Dr. James Woodrow (uncle of Woodrow Wilson), expressed his view that there was no conflict between the theory of evolution as he interpreted it and the teachings of scripture, many took umbrage, and on October 31, 1884, Palmer presented a paper to the Synod of Mississippi directed at Woodrow that rejected any implication "that the body of man is not immediately created, but is probably evolved from that of a brute." It depreciated the "new departure" in the seminary, declaring it intolerable that an unverified hypothesis should control the interpretation of the inspired Word.[1359] Woodrow's friends recognized that with the opposition of so influential a minister as Palmer, his case was doomed; and indeed, he was forced to resign from the seminary, immediately joining the faculty of the adjacent University of South Carolina.[1360]

An entirely different kind of essay could be written concerning Palmer's pastoral work during the frequent outbreaks and epidemics of yellow fever in New Orleans. As in most communities where fever was prevalent, there was a mass evacuation of all those who could afford to escape—an exodus one writer referred to as "a grand hurrying out of town." According to a vivid account of the 1878 yellow fever epidemic penned by author Sherwood Bonner of Holly Springs, Mississippi, onetime secretary and confidant to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: "Men, women and children struggled in one mighty effort as the first flight from the presence of an unseen foe. Trunks were packed hastily with such articles as came nearest to hand. . . . The streets leading to the depot were crowded, while every available vehicle was filled with baggage and human beings in one confused rush of frantic fear lest the outgoing train should leave them, and every moment of detention had in it the tick of death."[1361] Most clergy followed the example of Dr. Palmer in New Orleans, who had soldiered through every epidemic, caring for the sick of his congregation and the wider parish. But a few clergy fled, sacrificing their reputations to protect their health. Palmer would visit 30 to 50 homes of sickness every day, offering prayer for the suffering and consolation to the bereaved. Particularly devastating outbreaks occurred in the city in 1858, 1867, 1873, 1878, and 1897.[1362] His courage and fortitude in these situations was regarded by one and all as remarkable.[1363]

[1358] *New Orleans Times-Democrat* (June 15, 1886). See Scott Langston, "Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," *Southern Jewish History* 3 (2000): 83-124.

[1359] Although Princeton Seminary's Charles Hodge condemned Darwin's ideas, Woodrow had an ally in the Rev. James McCosh, the Scottish-born and educated president of Princeton College. McCosh asserted that, "When a scientific theory is brought before us, our first inquiry is not whether it is consistent with religion, but whether it is true." McCosh believed that the theory of evolution did not disprove the existence of God but tended to "increase the wonder and mystery of the process of creation." Cited in A. Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2013): 56, Robert K. Gustafson, *James Woodrow: Scientist, Theologian, Intellectual Leader* (Lewiston, N. Y.: Mellen Press, 1995): 133-226; Clement Eaton, *Freedom of Thought in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950).

[1360] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2:472.

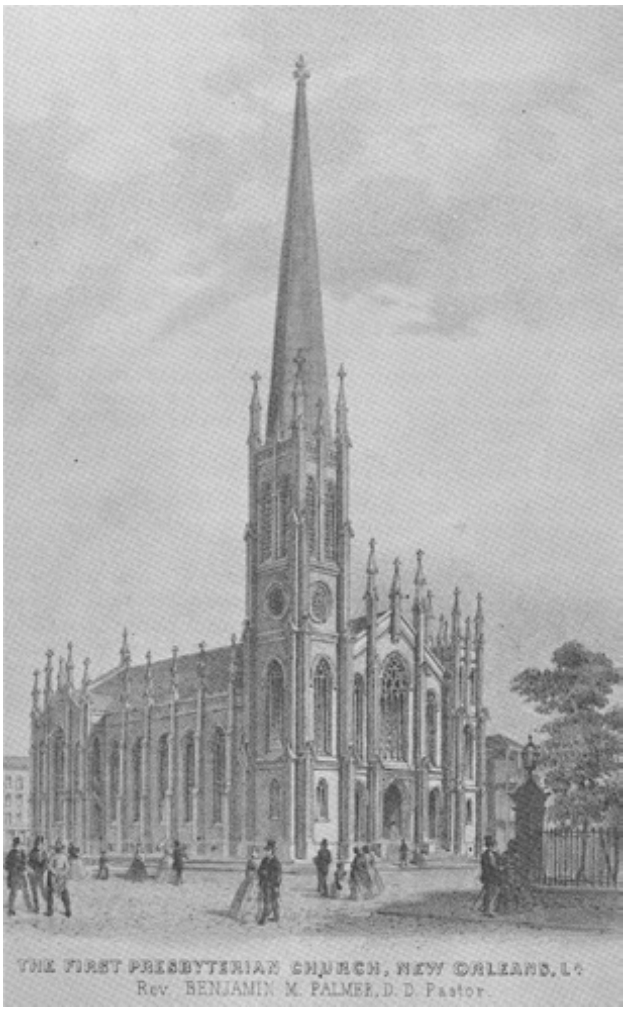
[1361] Sherwood Bonner's account, "The Yellow Plague of '78: A Record of Horror and Heroism," was written in response to the urging of "a friend in the North"—(no doubt Henry Wadsworth Longfellow). It was first published as a memorial pamphlet; then, in revised form, it appeared in *Youth's Companion* 52 (April 2, 1879).

[1362] George Augustin, *History of Yellow Fever* (New Orleans: Pub. for the author by Searcy & Pfaff, Ltd., 1909).

[1363] Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 188.

Last Years

Years passed, and Benjamin Morgan Palmer continued his long pastorate in New Orleans, maintaining his influence and continuing to draw large congregations including African Americans, who sat in the balconies.[1364] Pastorates of extended length were not unusual among Presbyterians. Many congregations enjoyed ministries of 20 years and more. Congregations including the First Church in New Orleans often achieved their largest memberships during the latter years of such pastorates. (The New Orleans church reached its peak membership in 1879.) On a visit to New Orleans in 1882, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), generally known as a critic of religion, attended Palmer's church while in the city. He told a reporter he planned to "hear Dr. Palmer as I used to do in the old days."[1365] Widowed in 1888, Palmer served his church 46 years.[1366]



[1364] Inez Berryhill Adams, who attended the Presbyterian College at Holly Springs where her uncle was pastor of the Presbyterian Church, wrote that, "Even though Negroes formed their own churches during Reconstruction, some continued to attend the Presbyterian Church. They sat in the balcony and never mingled with the white members." Inez Berryhill Adams, with Tom Adams, *The Class of 1912* (Lafayette, Calif.: Thomas-Berryhill Press, 1995): 30-31. There was irony in the fact that even as segregationists turned away African Americans from white-controlled Southern churches during the 1950s and '60s, African Americans had been welcomed to services as worshipers and as members throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries as late as World War I, after which the black members—most remaining from antebellum times—died away.

[1365] *New Orleans Times-Democrat* (April 29, 1882).

[1366] Palmer's ministry did not set a record for length. The Rev. Joseph B. Stratton, who arrived fresh from Princeton, served his entire ministry at First Presbyterian in Natchez—a pastorate of 51 years (1843-1894; emeritus, 1894-1903). Palmer's friend and sometime-ecclesiastical opponent Gardiner Spring served the Brick Church in New York 63 years!

Palmer preached twice each Sunday and called at the homes of members during the week. Many visited him in his study. As was his custom, Palmer lent his influence to a variety of conservative causes, both civil and ecclesiastical. Somehow, he found time to prepare sermons. Two volumes of his sermons have been published.[1367] Doubtless edited and expanded beyond the form in which they were delivered, they surely would have taken an hour or more to deliver. Often invited to preach in other congregations, especially as post-war churches dedicated new buildings, he rode the rails to points all over the South to fill these invitations as often as his duties in New Orleans would permit.[1368]

Notwithstanding his steadfast devotion to ideas later generations would regard as racist and unforgiving, he could be tender in his compassion for the suffering and experienced an immense measure of bereavement in his own household. Dr. and Mrs. Palmer lived to see the deaths of five of their six children. After the death of daughter Marion, he wrote a friend, "It is over now: 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord' [Job 1:21]. But if you do not know from experience how hard it is to turn anguish into worship, I cannot tell you, nor could Job."[1369]

Palmer continued to preach even as blindness took his ability to see his congregation. His vast store of knowledge helped him organize sermons mentally and deliver them from memory. Called by many the "first citizen of New Orleans," Palmer celebrated his 80th birthday in 1898. The Ladies' Association of the First Presbyterian Church planned a reception at their pastor's new home on Tuesday, January 25. Ten thousand people from every walk of life called on Palmer that day. Local papers ran articles lauding the old pastor and his church.[1370] As an elder statesman of the PCUS, he preached the communion sermon for the 1898 General Assembly, which met in New Orleans.

Invited in 1900 to address Confederate veterans at Louisville, Kentucky, he comforted his hearers, declaring that "history throughout is the progress of a trial. Good and evil are jumbled together in a strange mixture. The virtuous and the vile move together on the same plane, apparently under the same protection and enjoyment of equal blessings. Nay, the discrimination seems often to be against the good. . . . The mistake lies in forgetting the disciplinary character of life. They measure the arc of their little segment of Providence and think it the diameter of the entire circle. God's comprehensive plan takes in the breadth of all ages." The words were a restatement of his belief in the ultimate vindication of the South.[1371]

As his mobility declined, his nephew Wallace Thornwell Palmer was engaged in 1900 as assistant pastor for the New Orleans Church.[1372] Benjamin M. Palmer's last important utterance was his sermon preached "on the first day of the new century," January 1, 1901. There he spoke of "the conquering Prussian," who had strengthened the human stamina and political fabric of Europe, spurring his desire for whites in the South willing to fulfill a greater destiny by breeding a race of Nordic Christian supermen "to help guide civilization through a new age of scientific discovery."[1373] Such was a clue to the future—foreboding in ways—but to him offering hope. Indeed, Palmer was himself a user of new technology. Not only did he have electric lights installed in his church, but he also allowed his voice to be recorded on Edison discs several of which are said to be preserved at Union Presbyterian Seminary.[1374]

[1367] The collection is available today from Sprinkle Publications (2002).

[1368] Duncan, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Southern Presbyterian Divine." See Duncan's listing of events, 175-76.

[1369] Duncan, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Southern Presbyterian Divine," 399.

[1370] Duncan, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Southern Presbyterian Divine," 190.

[1371] "The Oration of Dr. Palmer," *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* (May 31, 1900).

[1372] Presbyterian churches of that era employed assistant pastors only for the sake of elderly incumbents. Otherwise, a minister was expected to have the sole care of a flock, no matter its size—this in an era when no congregation in the South exceeded 1,000 members. W. T. Palmer became co-pastor later in 1900, serving until his uncle's death, after which he was pastor of the church (1902-1908).

[1373] Wayne C. Eubank, "Palmer's Century Sermon, New Orleans, January 1, 1901," *Southern Speech Journal*, 35.1 (1969): 16-27.

[1374] Reilly, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Become Nationalist," 298.

Five months later, on May 5, all the city—indeed, the South—awaited news of his condition after the elder Palmer was struck by a streetcar on St. Charles Avenue near his home. He lingered 20 days, passing away peacefully at his home. The church was filled to capacity for his funeral. A detachment of veterans, clad in Confederate gray, "walked in halting steps behind the hearse" in the funeral procession.[1375] Two years later, his body was entombed with his wife and daughters in a stately mausoleum in Metairie Cemetery on the outskirts of New Orleans.

At a memorial service for Palmer held in the First Presbyterian Church on November 16, 1902, the city's clergy as well as a leading Jewish rabbi offered tributes. New Orleans rabbis had long been his friends (friendships among Southern Presbyterians and Reform Jews were common, for Southern Presbyterians did not evangelize Jews.)[1376] Now, in keeping with these friendships, Rabbi Isaac Leucht spoke at the memorial service.

Palmer's influence continued beyond the grave. On November 19, 1907, five years after his death, the Synod of Mississippi adopted a pastoral letter, "On the Gambling Habit." The letter included long quotations from Palmer's arguments in the Louisiana lottery controversy of the 1890s.

Streets, parks, institutions, and buildings were named after him. The street on which he lived after 1895 was named Palmer Avenue, as was the city's Palmer Park in the Garden District near his home. Palmer Orphanage began as a mission of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Mississippi in 1895. The pastor, William States Jacobs, was a Columbia Seminary graduate and great admirer of Palmer. (His father was the founder and longtime president of South Carolina's Thornwell Orphanage.) As the Presbyterians of South Carolina had some years previously established an orphanage and named it for their revered theologian, James Henley Thornwell, it was thought appropriate to name the new Mississippi institution for the Mississippi Synod's best-known preacher, B. M. Palmer, who had been the South Carolinian's much-esteemed friend, colleague, and biographer.[1377]

Palmer College, in De Funiak Springs, Florida, for the education of teachers, was named after B. M. Palmer in 1906 and carried on its work until 1936, when financial difficulties of the Great Depression forced it to close.[1378] The PCUS Board of Publication, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, issued many books of a theological character in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also biographical and historical works, principally honoring older leaders in the Confederate Presbyterian cause. These included large volumes devoted to the memories of Thornwell (1875), Waddel (1891), Dabney (1903), and Palmer (1906). Palmer's ministry was reviewed appreciatively in a volume, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders, 1683-1911* (1911), by Columbia Seminary professor Henry Alexander White, published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the PCUS Assembly.[1379] He was memorialized as a Christian statesman in a similar volume, *Southern Presbyterian Worthies* (1936), by the Rev. John Miller Wells,[1380] a former president of Columbia Seminary, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the PCUS.[1381] In 1939, when the First Presbyterian Church moved to Claiborne Avenue, the new building's Palmer Hall, where his portrait hangs, was named after him. When Southwestern College moved to Memphis in 1925, the large collegiate Gothic main building on the new campus was named after Palmer, memorializing his efforts as the "father of this institution" to receive the property of old Stewart College, making it possible to organize the original Southwestern Presbyterian University.

[1375] [1361] "The Men in Gray," *The New Orleans Times-Democrat* (May 31, 1902).

[1376] This also, perhaps, because Presbyterians, more than others, made use of the Hebrew scriptures and the psalms in their worship.

[1377] Minutes of Tombeckbee Presbytery (October 13, 1894); Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi (November 9, 1894); Joe Maxwell, "Palmer Yesterday*:* A Century of Caring," *A Century of Hope, A Passion to Care: Palmer Home for Children Centennial Edition, 1895-1995* (Columbus: privately published, 1995): 28-49.

[1378] "The Florida Memories Blog: Palmer College—Education in the Panhandle." https://www.floridamemory.com/blog/tag/palmer-college/ Accessed 12.27.18.

[1379] Henry Alexander White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders* (New York: Neale, 1911): 359-81.

[1380] Wells was a member of an influential Hinds County, Mississippi, family long known (especially through Jackson's First Presbyterian Church) for its influence on behalf of conservative causes in the PCUS.

[1381] John Miller Wells, *Southern Presbyterian Worthies* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1936).

Palmer, "the Lost Cause," and the Ongoing Problem of Race

As events would have it, Palmer was correct when he fingered "the race problem" as a barrier to reunion with the Northern Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. For many years, racial issues certainly were a barrier, but race was also a barrier to Southerners in virtually every department of life. The system of segregation enshrined in law and in a myriad of cultural practices required so much energy to conceive and enforce that the vitality of Southern society and white-controlled religion was sapped for generations.

With the exception of the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy, no theological concept was held with such ardor by conservative 20th century Presbyterians, as the "Spirituality of the Church." Palmer and others in the generations that followed the Civil War further developed it to the point that they claimed it was "the distinctive doctrine" of the PCUS over against the U.S.A. Church[1382] and other denominations. As a consequence, PCUS adherence to the Spirituality of the Church greatly complicated its ability to make progress in race relations. Most other white-controlled Southern churches, as well as conservative Protestants elsewhere in the country, followed some version of the Spirituality of the Church, but as with the antebellum justification for slavery, it was Southern Presbyterians who articulated the teaching.

William B. Sweetser Jr., a recent historian of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Virginia, explains that "Southern Presbyterians justified the spirituality of the church on the foundation of *jure divino* Presbyterianism, first set forth in the Second Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland (1581). This theory held that God had set forth a plan for the government and doctrine of the Church in his infallible Word. This "divine-law Presbyterianism" obligated the Church to teach and do all that was commanded in or by the Holy Scripture; but also, the Church was implicitly forbidden to teach or do anything that was not commanded, or that could not be drawn from it by deduction. "In this way a 'pure' church, speaking the Word of God, would purify society."[1383]

These ideas surrounding the Church's isolation from secular affairs were reinforced by many Southern Presbyterian thinkers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; most significantly, they were written into the PCUS constitution, its *Book of Church Order*. Indeed, PCUS conservatives believed that the U.S.A. Church "had been engaged in a fatal embrace with politics since 1861." They claimed that the fidelity to the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church fully justified the denomination's separate existence.

But the lines between church and state were not always clear. Palmer, one of the earliest and one of the most persistent champions of the doctrine of the Church's spirituality, reserved the right to address "political questions" if a moral imperative was involved. Ministers also claimed the right to address political matters through the church papers and as individuals outside their pulpits. This Palmer had done with reference to the Louisiana lottery. But he had defended slavery and called for secession from the pulpit. Where was the distinction between "moral issues" and "political questions"? The debate over prohibition of alcohol laid the issue bare. Here, most conservative Protestants came very close to the line, "condemning the evil of selling liquor," but not specifically calling for a law against it. To many, this seemed a distinction without a difference. The Presbyterian *Confession of Faith* (1647), the Church's chief doctrinal standard, did recognize the right of "synods and councils" to address the civil magistrate "by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary," but whereas this was done with some frequency with reference to the alcohol question, conservatives were adamant that the Church should not speak on matters concerning race. Palmer's own inconsistency presaged in the germ the dissolution of the doctrine of the Church's spirituality.

Efforts to move beyond the artificial constraints of the Southern Church's particular doctrine consumed most of the 20th century and have been told in detail by historians. The critique was given a fine point by Union Seminary's professor of historical theology, John H. Leith, who wrote in 1983 that "the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church was easily confused with indifference to or retreat from the problems of society." The doctrine, as originally constituted, did not forbid the Church from identifying social problem, or advocating for reform. It did

[1382] Conservatives in the U.S.A. Church also embraced the doctrine of the Church's spirituality, notably through publications such as *The Presbyterian Layman*, founded in the 1960s in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

[1383] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 165.

not forbid calling upon its members and the wider society to apply the great principles of the Christian religion to correct blatant wrongdoing in public life or to improve specific situations involving individuals, whether they be Christian or not. Thus, wrote Thornwell, "The Church has no hesitation in cordially approving of abstinence from intoxicating drinks as a matter of Christian expediency, according to the words of the Apostle in Romans 16:21," but the Church could not go beyond the proclamation of the Word of God. Temperance societies and philanthropic causes, as well as moral reform movements, could be encouraged but could not operate as agencies of the Church. As Leith observed, "Thornwell insisted on the spiritual character of the Church, but he did not isolate Christian faith from public life." Thornwell, in fact, with other Southern Presbyterians of his time preached sermons on topics such as the duties of owners toward their slaves. Moreover, the Church's ongoing involvement with colleges and schools indicated that its work was seen as more than preaching for the conversion of souls.[1384]

But advocacy of civil rights for African Americans, like slavery a century before, was considered "political" and therefore outside the boundaries of Church concern. It was thought that Christians, "hearing the Word of God rightly preached every Sunday, would make up their own minds and institute godly policies."[1385] Historian Jack Maddex believed that James H. Thornwell never intended his doctrine to mean that churches could not "address the state" or endorse or condemn the programs of the surrounding society. Maddex argued, however, that following the Civil War, this was exactly how Southerners like Palmer came to understand Thornwell's position. With the crushing defeat of the Confederacy—the cause so many Southerners believed had been ordained by Providence—Presbyterians were less inclined to invoke divine sanction for human politics. The Southern Church's 1865 Assembly stated that only as "a spiritual kingdom" independent of politics could the Church survive the fall of earthly regimes. Thus, as Maddex argues, by selectively drawing on Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer, a revised doctrine of the Church's spirituality emerged, elevating it as the cardinal doctrinal distinctiveness of the PCUS—which fully justified its existence as a communion separate from other bodies.[1386]

As civil rights historian Carolyn Renée Dupont noted, "Religion [based on the idea of the Church's spirituality] gave . . . few conceptual tools for understanding the reciprocal truth: that collective sins could create insurmountable individual problems." In time, the doctrine of the Church's spirituality came to mean that the Church could not act in the public sphere or speak to the broader culture. By the 1940s, conservatives standing in the tradition of Palmer and his generation were asking far more of the doctrine that it was originally designed to teach.[1387]

As E. T. Thompson has said that all knew that once the PCUS acknowledged "sin . . . in the social life" of the nation, it would be but a matter of time before it addressed racial discrimination and other matters that challenged conservative Southerners. He wrote that,

> Southern Presbyterian ministers preached the evangelical gospel convicting men of sin, pointing them to Christ, confirming them in the faith, comforting them in sorrow, strengthening them for the battles of life, setting before them high personal ideals, planting seeds which would bring forth 'the fruit of the Spirit,' but not a gospel which pricked the conscience regarding the deeply entrenched wrongs of Southern society. The Southern Presbyterian minister was expected to ignore the growing Jim Crow mentality, child labor, [voter] disenfranchisement, and lynchings—thus to preach 'a dateless religion, one that is the same yesterday, today and forever.'[1388]

[1384] Adger and Girardeau, 4:471; John H. Leith, "James Henley Thornwell and the Shaping of the Reformed Tradition in the South" (Lancaster, S.C.: privately published, 1983): 23-24; cf. John H. Leith, "James Henley Thornwell and the Shaping of the Reformed Tradition in the South," in Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong, eds. *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989); Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 442-43.

[1385] Sweetser, *A Copious Fountain*, 165, 221.

[1386] See "From Theocracy to Spirituality," 438-57.

[1387] Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 229, 21-22, 36.

[1388] E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3:358-59.

In 1949, the PCUS Committee on Social and Moral Welfare declared that American minorities' claims to full civil rights have a "sound moral and historical basis." Union Seminary professors Walter Lingle and Thompson spearheaded efforts to move their denomination away from a limiting view of spirituality and toward a vision of Christianity that included social reform. Among such efforts, in 1944, Thompson and others launched *The Presbyterian Outlook* as a counterweight to *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*, a conservative paper founded two years before to uphold the idea of the Spirituality of the Church and oppose racial change, as well as union with the U.S.A. Church.[1389] Writer after writer in "*The Journal*" emphasized that action on issues such as race relations was for individuals as "Christian citizens," who had responsibility "as citizens of society" to reform these evils. But the Church, as an entity, "should never consider or offer an opinion" on such matters, for "she is not an expert in these fields of life," and "It will turn her from the great task of preaching the Gospel."[1390]

The influential analyst of American racial practices, the Swedish Nobel laureate, Gunnar Myrdal (1898-1987), who believed that whites oppressed African Americans and then cited Blacks' poor performance as justification for discrimination, asserted that the discriminatory practices of many Americans were bolstered with strong religious sanction. Myrdal believed that Southern whites based their caste system on the "defense ideology of slavery"—an ideology that was explicated principally by Southern Presbyterian theologians such as Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer. His assertion was given credence by the fact that mid-20th century Presbyterian defenders of segregation such as Bell and G. T. Gillespie, longtime president of Belhaven College, a Presbyterian institution in Jackson, Mississippi, still argued that Southern slavery had been legitimate on scriptural grounds and that the current system of racial segregation was consistent with biblical teaching. As Bell wrote in 1944, "Why God saw fit to make some men white and some black may go back to Genesis 9."[1391] Meanwhile, *The Presbyterian Outlook* warned that "secular, non-Protestant" agencies were taking the lead in eradicating segregation" and predicted that unless Christians rallied to support the civil rights movement, the Church would become "the last stronghold of segregation."[1392] In 1953, *The Outlook* predicted that local congregations would be tempted to turn themselves into havens for those opposing desegregation. "Such capitulation to the evil forces of the world could be the price of death to a church. No longer could Christianity "afford to be on the wrong side of a moral force, as it was in some areas when it defended slavery."

The Synod of Mississippi, meeting in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court school desegregation decision, by a vote of 60 to 48 on November 5, 1954, described the controversies surrounding segregation as a "controversial political issue. . . secular" in nature, and outside the Church's jurisdiction. (Meeting just before the *Brown* decision was announced, the PCUS had adopted strongly worded anti-segregation resolutions.)[1393] The closeness of the vote indicated a growing friction among Presbyterians in Dr. Palmer's old synod.[1394] As Sean Michael Lucas has remarked, this need to react led PCUS conservatives "to link racial traditionalism, anti-communism, and libertarianism into a powerful argument for conservative dissent, stressing what was wrong with their church and their country," so that "Suddenly, the controversy over reunion became more than a fight to preserve a southern church; it became a battle to preserve the southern way of life."[1395]

[1389] See Ernest Trice Thompson, *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961).

[1390] See L. Nelson Bell, "What is the Gospel?" *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 5 (August 1, 1946): 3; D. S. Gage, "Characteristics of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 6 (March 1, 1948): 11, etc.

[1391] Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 31 (1859): 617-18; Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*: 1:584.

[1392] *Presbyterian Outlook* 84 (November 10, 1952): 4.

[1393] "The Church and Segregation: A Statement to Southern Christians," Minutes of the General Assembly (PCUS, 1954): 187-98.

[1394] "Presbyterians Back Segregation, Giving Okay to Sharp Report by Dr. Gillespie," *Jackson Daily News* (November 5, 1954): 7.

[1395] Lucas, *For a Continuing* Church, 132, 137; "Say State Presbyterians Would Secede If Proposed Union Goes Into Effect," *Jackson Daily News* (June 1, 1954): 1; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 228; James C. Cobb, *The Brown Decision, Jim Crow,*

Retired Belhaven president, the Rev. G. T. Gillespie, represented the old views. In an adjourned meeting at First Presbyterian Church in Greenwood in November 1954, in the wake of the *Brown* decision, the Synod of Mississippi listened to an address by Gillespie that asserted that the integration movement was "a communist plot and that it would lead to racial intermarriage and the development of a hybrid race." He argued on biblical, scientific, and utilitarian grounds that segregation was "one of nature's universal laws," adducing statements by Jefferson, Lincoln, and Booker T. Washington to support the idea of racial segregation. Gillespie's address before the synod was offered as a minority report to an overture calling the General Assembly to reverse its support for desegregation. Ironically, by delivering his paper opposing the General Assembly's call for obedience to the Supreme Court decree, at a meeting of the synod, Gillespie had addressed "a political question" from the pulpit. His address, while not formally adopted by the synod, was published in newspapers and church publications, and with his permission, was distributed widely in pamphlet form by the Mississippi White Citizens' Council.[1396] The address was a remarkable production. Gillespie echoed the sentiments of B. M. Palmer, a revered member of the synod. Older members would have studied Palmer's writings in seminary.

In 1961, the PCUS marked its centennial. Two books were published: The Rev. T. Watson Street of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary published a brief history of the PCUS entitled *The Story of Southern Presbyterians*, and E. T. Thompson published the first volume of his comprehensive history, *Presbyterians in the South*. Unlike earlier defenses of the Church, these explored in a critical way the role of leaders such as Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer in laying the intellectual and theological groundwork for the Southern justification of slavery and secession prior to and after the Civil War.

But there were other views published outside the purview of the PCUS. In the midst of the 1960s turmoil over civil rights, there was a revival of interest in Southern Presbyterian theologians and preachers including Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer. Their writings attracted interest among conservative theological students—some Presbyterian, some from a "Reformed Baptist" movement, and even the odd Episcopalian.

The older theologians were introduced to a new generation by the Rev. Morton H. Smith (1923-2017), a Virginia native who had studied at Columbia Seminary, later teaching at Belhaven. Smith unapologetically hoped for a return to the doctrines of an earlier time, which he saw as a kind of theological golden age. His book, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (1962), was the product of Ph.D. studies at the Free University of Amsterdam. Smith's interests focused on treatments of scriptural inspiration and divine election as taught in the 19th and early 20th century by Southern Presbyterian theologians and preachers such as Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer. He did not examine the racial views or teachings on slavery, or any connection that may have existed between their formal concepts and their application of God's teaching to such matters. His work[1397] avoided the connection that formed an explicit focus of books by other historians of the same period, such as E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Society, 1795-1860* (1978), and James O. Farmer Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (1986).

These scholars argued that the Southern Presbyterian theologians made explicit connections between their theologies of predestination and election and their defense of slaveholding and African American subordination. But Smith's commendation of the older theologians' work contributed to a resurgence of interest among Presbyterian conservatives in the old Southern thinkers, rightly recognizing their influence in the time during which they lived, and many of their works were republished. Smith's failure to discuss their pro-slavery and racist arguments on behalf of African subordination helped further avoidance of work toward racial progress among many fellow conservatives in his time. Smith also committed himself in print to a defense of segregation and racial subordination, undertaken as an explanation of traditional white Southern attitudes and practices at a time he was being considered for a faculty post at Westminster Seminary, a conservative (but non-segregationist) Presbyterian

and Southern Identity (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

[1396] For analysis and critique of biblical arguments used to support southern racial segregation, see Donald G. Miller, "Shall We Then Hear the Word of God and Do It?" *Presbyterian Outlook* 137 (March 14, 1955): 10-14; cf. Billy Don Sherman, "The Ideology of American Segregationism" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966).

[1397] Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962).

seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[1398] He repeated these arguments in a book he wrote urging PCUS churches to form a new denomination in 1973.[1399]

Conservatives reprinted many of the writings of the old Southern Presbyterian theologians, some by the Banner of Truth Trust, a British organization that reprinted writings of Puritan theologians and others who embraced their ideas in an uncritical way. Then, in the 1980s, a small Virginia company, Sprinkle Publications, was formed to reprint texts by Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer, as well as books relating to the Civil War—specifically writings that defended the Confederacy and religious ideas associated with its leaders. Palmer's biography by Thomas Cary Johnson was reprinted.[1400] Others with highly controversial right-wing religious agendas, such as Rousas J. Rushdooney (1916–2001) whose Christian Reconstruction movement called for the establishment of theocratic rule in civil society, also took interest in Palmer's writings, as did as certain Neo-Confederate activists whose ideologies had a more overtly political dimension. Some associated with these loosely aligned and highly idiosyncratic movements embraced white supremacist ideas.[1401]

The controversy and ferment of the times resulted in a division of the Presbyterian Church, some of it tinged with racial animus as pastors in white-controlled churches who urged that all comers presenting themselves for Sunday services be seated were driven from their pulpits. Far too complex to trace here, as noted in Morton Smith's 1973 book, *How is the Gold become Dim?*, some saw the PCUS Assembly's critiques of segregation as grounds for ecclesiastical realignment. Defense of the theological doctrine of an inerrant Bible became bound up in the controversies. During the 1940s and 1950s, most who advocated segregation rejected historical-critical approaches to the biblical text being taught in denominational seminaries. Graduates of those seminaries who spoke for racial justice were believed to derive such ideas based on the "low" view of scripture that the modern professors were alleged to hold.

Conversely, most who believed in segregation also held to the verbal inerrancy of the Bible, unquestioningly accepting that the "Southern way of life" was congruent with the teachings of Holy Writ—simply because those who had gone before them had so believed and taught. Years later, most would recognize that the issue had less to do with understandings of scriptural inspiration and authority, than with biblical interpretation and application of scriptural teachings to these very real questions of Southern life and practice. But as these questions were being hotly debated and for other reasons, including the ordination of women, local ownership of church property, and the church's relationship to gay persons, during this period, the majority of Presbyterian congregations in certain areas—Mississippi, Eastern Arkansas, and West Tennessee, for example—withdrew from the wider Presbyterian fold to align with new and more conservative denominations. Now, most Mid-South Presbyterian congregations are aligned with conservative denominations.[1402]

The ideas presented by those seeking to reclaim Confederate religious and racial ideology occurred at the same

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[1398] Morton H. Smith, "The Racial Problem Facing America," *Presbyterian Guardian* 33 (October 1964): 125-27.

[1399] Morton H. Smith, "*How Is the Gold Become Dim?" The Decline of the Presbyterian Church, U. S.* (Published by the Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church, 1973).

[1400] The small Virginia publisher has reprinted a number of Palmer's writings, most notably two volumes of his collected *Sermons*, issued in a single volume (2002): 1,130 pp. According to the company website, owners Lloyd and Jacqueline Sprinkle state that, "We believe Sprinkle Publications is a ministry as well as a business. A visit to many "Christian Book Stores" reveals the vast wasteland of 'fluff' currently available in the theological section and 'reinvented' history in the historical section. To combat the onslaught of humanism and postmodern theology, we offer books which contain the old truths of the Scripture and original sources of history." http://www. sprinklepublications.net/index.html. Accessed 12.27.18.

[1401] See Edward H. Sebesta and Euan Hague, "The U.S. Civil War as a Theological War: Neo-Confederacy, Christian Nationalism, and Theology," in Euan Hague, Heidi Beirich, and Edward H. Sebesta, eds., *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008): 50-75.

[1402] See R. Milton Winter, "Division & Reunion in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.: A Mississippi Retrospective," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (Spring 2000): 67-86. *https://phs-app-media.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/08Winter.pdf;* Stephen R. Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Carter Dalton Lyon, *Sanctuaries of Segregation: The Story of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017).

time,[1403] and perhaps helped spark a new recognition that the issues and discussions of slavery and race in the era leading to secession and the Civil War were permeated with religious ideas, often passionately held. Also was the civil rights movement, so that most scholars now recognize that this history cannot be understood apart from some analysis of the religious thinking of its principal spokespeople, however confusing the result may be.[1404] While the religious ideas of some called for the abolition of slavery, others believed their faith compelled (or permitted) the iron laws of human bondage and then segregation. Many saw the intransigence of the conservative churches as a complete moral failure, an inability to address their region's most pressing social problem so as to achieve justice and avert violence—much less to pursue brotherhood among fellow Christians. Indeed, as Mark Noll has wryly observed in his book, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (2006), "It was left [at least in the earlier era] to those consummate theologians, the Reverend Doctors Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, to decide what in fact the Bible actually meant."[1405]

There has also been reassessment of older views on race among present-day leaders of conservative Presbyterian denominations, led most notably by the Revs. J. Ligon Duncan,[1406] chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary, and Sean J. Lucas, professor of history in the same institution and now also pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Memphis. Duncan and Lucas worked with an organization called the Gospel Coalition, representing the Presbyterian Church in America in conversations that attempted to find "a theological center" for the wider evangelical movement's social justice work. These efforts were to have important results.[1407] In 2004, the PCA General Assembly approved a pastoral letter, authored by the two men, "The Gospel and Race,"[1408] following upon the actions from its Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley (which included Duncan's Jackson, Mississippi, congregation) in 2002. Identifying racism as one of America's national sins, it said:

We therefore confess our covenantal involvement in these national sins. As a people, both we and our fathers have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws our God has commanded. We therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts, which has constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.

As a people, we pledge to work hard, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries.

[1403] See, for example, the Confederate Presbyterian Church of Wiggins, Mississippi. Organized by defeated gubernatorial candidate John Thomas Cripps, active in the League of the South (now the Southern Nationalist Lague), an American white nationalist, neo-Confederate, white supremacist organization. The church was located beside Cripps' Confederate Research Center. It was described in 2001 as "holding a neo-Confederate ideology, and was associated with efforts to retain a state flag that featured a version of the Confederate battle flag." The chapel was said to be decorated with portraits of Confederate generals Robert E. Lee, Nathan Bedford Forrest, and Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson. See "Ghosts of the South," *Time Magazine* 157:17 (April 30, 2001).

[1404] Needless to say, scholars of 19th century Presbyterian theology are nonplussed by the selective use that Neo-Confederates, racists, and white nationalists make of the otherwise "orthodox" writings of men such as Thornwell, Dabney, and Palmer, that have been appropriated by such persons and groups. Examples of serious theological work on the Southern Presbyterian theologians include Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978); and Sean Michael Lucas, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southern Presbyterian Lif*e (Phillipsburg, N.J.: 2005).

[1405] Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 50; Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006).

[1406] https://ligonduncan.com/defending-the-faith-denying-the-image-19th-century-american-confessional-calvinism-in-faithfulness-and-failure/ Accessed 12.29.18.

[1407] Sean Michael Lucas, *Blessed Zion: First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, 1837-2012* (Jackson: First Presbyterian Church):172.

[1408] http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/Pastoral-Letter-Overture-55-MS-Valley.pdf. Accessed 12.29.18.

The letter concluded with thoughtful, concrete, and specific steps that individuals and congregations should take to implement the spirit and goals of racial reconciliation as Christian people.

In 2005, an interracial PCA congregation, Redeemer Church, was organized with financial assistance from Jackson's First Church at the site of the former Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCA), which had followed its congregation to a new location in the city's Northern suburbs. Redeemer Church, located in a neighborhood that was once mostly white but now racially mixed, called co-pastors, one white and one African American. The church intentionally sought to invite and welcome persons of all races to its worshiping community.[1409] Christ Fellowship, a new PCA congregation in Horn Lake, Mississippi, was also intentionally interracial. Located in a mixed-race neighborhood, the church sought to live out the intentions of Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all ONE IN CHRIST Jesus" (their emphasis). According to their webpage, "Christ Fellowship wants to be a church that is so committed to the unifying Gospel of Jesus that everyone in our community will know us by our love for one another—regardless of ethnicity, social status, age, or gender."[1410] Second Church in Memphis, under the leadership of its current pastor, the Rev. George W. Robertson, has also begun ministries directed toward racial reconciliation.

Churches in smaller towns also did intentional work to bring people together across racial lines. Clarksdale's historically white First Presbyterian Church also began an outreach to African Americans. In 2015, the Rev. Mark Webb, an African American, was called as assistant pastor and minister of outreach. Clarksdale is a distressed community, with high rates of poverty, crime, and population loss. Both the town's Presbyterian and Episcopal churches became interracial, with African Americans and whites working to address the serious challenges the small city faced. As Will Campbell, the outspoken Baptist chaplain and author who supported James Meredith at Ole Miss during its integration crisis, had predicted a generation before, this "conscious decision" to put the Church's "house in order" came not from radical reformers, but from within conservative evangelical Christianity.[1411]

Important conservative Memphis congregations such as Second and Independent Presbyterian worked on racial reconciliation issues, and Hope Church, a large, predominately white Evangelical Presbyterian Church, called an African American pastor. Also, noteworthy is Downtown Church in Memphis, another Evangelical Presbyterian congregation, intentionally interracial in staffing and membership and, in its early years, meeting in historic Clayborn Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church[1412] (prior to 1950 the Second Presbyterian Church).[1413] The transformation of old, and organization of new, otherwise conservative congregations represent a growing trend among younger evangelicals across the United States.

Meanwhile, in a different direction, Palmer's former New Orleans congregation, still aligned with the PCUSA, has become a "More Light Presbyterian Church," welcoming people from all races, gen ders, and sexual orientations. Located in the city's artsy Uptown District, it is a racially mixed congregation, carries out a vital ministry to impoverished, unsheltered, or abused persons of all races, and is today one of the city's best-known gay-welcoming communities, offering same-gender weddings and having called some years ago the first openly gay pastor to serve in Louisiana.[1414]

Palmer lived a long life, influencing others. As such, it was almost inevitable that the times would pass him by. Some of his actions were marked with kindness in his care for those suffering with yellow fever, his ongoing work as a pastor, and his desire that the young should be educated in a great college. Much of his teaching on race has been rejected by the Church as well as by the society in which he moved. Yet his thought on such matters should be studied, for it was deep and carefully developed—if only as a warning of ways a culture and its leaders

[1409] Lucas, *Blessed Zion*, 172.

[1410] http://www.onehornlake.org/our-vision/ Accessed 12.29.18.

[1411] Will D. Campbell, *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962): 85.

[1412] The church was the site of one of the Rev. Martin L. King Jr.'s last speeches.

[1413] The historic building burned April 28, 2025.

[1414] https://www.fpcno.org/ Accessed 2.5.26.

can follow a self-justifying course, baptizing it in the sanctity of religion and robbing the humanity of many to serve the interests of a few.

"I Remember…Memories of the Cemetery by the Railroad, Cleveland, Mississippi"

Milton Winter writes that "My family has never been one to make soulful pilgrimages to the cemetery, and so I have been surprised to have felt the need to do so with some frequency over the years. I suppose it is the pull of the old prayer I recite in our burial service, that 'as thou hast given us this new tie to bind us to the world unseen, so grant that where our treasure is, there may our hearts be also.'"

Of course, the prayer refers to heaven, but there is a certain pull toward the earthly resting places of those we have loved long since and lost a while. And so, I slip off to our old family cemetery near Clinton, Kentucky for this purpose whenever I can.

We have been told that often there comes a time when people feel that more of their loved ones are on the other side, and that this realization softens one's apprehensiveness—to borrow Tennyson's grand phrase—about "crossing the bar."

Be this as it may, a church conference took me back to my hometown of Cleveland, Mississippi, and as I was driving from the church to the motel on the highway to change clothes for the evening meal, I recalled a short cut and turned off the busy east-west highway and drove up a quiet street that in the days of the T-Model was once the main highway leading out of town.

There, nearing the time of sunset beside Cleveland's interesting art-deco Coca-Cola bottling plant—now a sad ruin with its windows broken out—lies the cemetery where once the town's African American citizens were buried.

Like the building next door, the cemetery presents a scene of dismal abandonment. It is grown up in weeds, and vandals have pulled down most of the markers, and what markers have not been pulled down have collapsed into the sunken earth of the solitary untended graves. Even the railroad track that formed the cemetery's western boundary has been pulled up, so that not even the bustle and adventure of an approaching train can stir the melancholy air.

I made a split-second decision to stop and visit the resting places of Clara and Jack Jackson—she being our family housekeeper for over 30 years. Both had passed away after I was no longer at home, and since I had not been present for their funerals, I knew the only way to find the graves was to walk up and down the rows, looking until I found the spot.

After examining the markers, I had to conclude that neither of the Jacksons had them, or that the stones had sunk into the Delta loam so rich in what it brings forth, but which also reclaims everything that is laid within it. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord," begins the church's burial service, quoting the Old Testament wisdom of Job.

Unlike Holly Springs, where I lived at the time, Black and white have lain side by side in that town's Hill Crest Cemetery since earliest times, before the iron rules of segregation were put in place. Cleveland, settled later, was a segregated city, with a line thrown by the railroad, demarcating not only where one lived or went to school but also where one was laid to rest. I suppose it is different now, but I lived in Cleveland in what seems now to have been a small eternity ago.

The world has changed, but time had not softened the harshness of the old order on view in Cleveland's "Colored" Cemetery as I walked its deserted lanes. After all, here was I, having grown up in this place—yet never

had my feet touched this particular patch of consecrated soil, though its residents had ministered in my home and with "my" people often having given little thought to what became of them.

I had ridden by the old burying ground a thousand times. Yet it was if a tall fence had separated my world from this; but there had never been a fence here, only the intent of human custom, passed down through the decades—most of it accepted and unquestioned far too long.

Now I wanted to know where my loved ones, the Jacksons, were, so much a part of my growing up, and knowing they were near, yet not knowing. (I believe that heaven is not that far away.) Clara had lived to be 100 years old, yet how brief and impermanent is the mark we leave upon this earth.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God…. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night….The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away. So, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psalm 90)

How often have I read these words in the funeral service, but never had they struck me with such intensity as I recalled them in the fading light of a Mississippi evening. I noted that many of the markers were handmade. Some identified those who slept beneath as "Mr." or "Mrs.," claiming in death those titles of courtesy and recognition of marriage that had been denied them in life. I reflected that I grew through childhood loving Clara as if a second mother, never did we ask her to sit with us in the dining room as we enjoyed the wonderful holiday meals she prepared. We spoke to her with the familiarity of her Christian name, but I only among the family was addressed by her with the same familiar speech.

The inequalities and distinctions of this life are erased, we believe, in death. And yet one feels that our time on earth is too important to let it pass without some attempt to mirror the principles of God's heaven upon the earth here and now.

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Outposts of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians in the Nineteenth Century

Book Review from *The Journal of Presbyterian History* (Spring/Summer 2016)

Here is an encyclopedic history of early Presbyterians in Mississippi. Milton Winter has done a splendid job of gathering and publishing a wealth of information on the pioneers, early missionaries to the Chickasaw and Choctaw, preachers, committed elders, and the congregations and governing bodies of the Presbyterians. He follows them from the time of their first entry into the territory at the turn of the nineteenth century, through the era of church and presbytery development, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and into the onset of the Jim Crow era. This book is a major resource for those interested in Presbyterians in the Deep South.

An early Alabama Presbyterian wrote in 1819 of his "tour through the Mississippi," finding it as "destitute of regular preachers" as his own state. To follow Winter's account, perhaps he should have looked more thoroughly at the situation. Already William Montgomery had been serving there for twenty years. By 1807, James Smylie had organized a congregation and an academy near Natchez. Joseph Bullen, Jacob Rickhow, Daniel Smith, and others were there by 1819. In fact, the 1815 Synod of Kentucky commissioners had authorized forming a "Presbytery of Mississippi," which met in 1816 and elected Bullen as moderator. The Alabaman traveler had correctly identified the problem, however, for Mississippi Presbyterian and Reformed families had yearned for more ministerial leadership for decades. And the need for missionaries to Native Americans was cri tical, especially before the removal of tribes to the "West" in the 1820s. The issues of that time—what and how to teach Native Americans; how to deal with complex issues of slavery and manumission; how to reconcile the Christian gospel with tribal religion and culture—all these and more Winter treats in his narrative, along with sidebars offering notes from primary sources.

Outposts of Zion offers written snapshots of every congregation in the state—a significant feat, and one badly needed as the number of Presbyterian congregations has diminished in recent years. It also offers, in a style of appreciative inquiry, profiles of many leaders and movements. In this review, only a few highlights can be noted.

Winter tells of the forming of the Mayhew mission, its school, and its multicultural congregation—Black, Native American, and White—from its inception in 1821. From an initial state of institutional fragility, the Mayhew church evolved over time to become First Presbyterian, Starkville: the oldest continuing congregation in Northern Mississippi. Winter also discusses the founding and support of Presbyterian-related educational institutions, both schools and colleges. Especially noteworthy is the account of John N. Waddel, his tenure at the

University of Mississippi, and his establishment of the theological school at Southwestern Presbyterian University in Clarksville, Tennessee, where many Mississippi Presbyterians were educated.

Winter speaks of "Christianity for the Servants' Gallery," covering the treatment of slaves, the preaching to slaves, and the development of pro-slavery theological stances, as well as the actual use of sanctuary galleries. He laments the diminished presence of African American Presbyterians in the Reconstruction era. He devotes a whole chapter to the special ministry of James Adair Lyon, pastor in Columbus Mississippi from 1841 to 1847 and again from 1855 to 1870 [teaching at the University of Mississippi until 1881]. Lyon advocated church involvement in the public square, reform of slavery, moral rectitude among politicians, and reunion of the divided branches of the Presbyterian Church—all generally unpopular in the Mississippi of his day.

Since Winter served for many years as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Holly Springs, he naturally mines the minutes, diaries, and letters of members of that significant congregation to describe much of nineteenth-century Presbyterian life. Part of the special value of this work is the insight a dedicated and competent pastor can give to the whole fabric of Christian living—to the ministry of women's groups, Sunday schools, mission involvement, stewardship habits, and the moral emphases through time which are generally neglected in a larger narrative. Winter devotes attention to all of these, and to some of the quirks of congregants' lives as well. For a Presbyterian pastor, such experience yields insight into the relationship of congregations to middle governing bodies and national denominations. Mississippi Presbyterians may have existed in outposts, but they did not exist in vacuums. I heartily commend this book to interested Presbyterians and to scholars of American religion, whatever their allegiances.

Dr. Winter is also the author of two companion volumes: *Citadels of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterianism (1900-2016).*

The Reviewer, the Rev. Dr. Louis B. Weeks, is a native of Memphis and is the president *emeritus* of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. He also served as a pastor, missionary to the Congo, and dean of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Kentucky Presbyterians: A History.* He resides in Williamsburg, Virginia.